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THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF EMPOWERED VOLUNTEERS: A STUDY OF
CHRISTIAN CHURCH VOLUNTEERS

by

Adam K. Peters

A THESIS

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THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF EMPOWERED VOLUNTEERS: A STUDY OF CHRISTIAN CHURCH VOLUNTEERS

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University of Nebraska, 2010

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Psychological empowerment has been thoroughly studied in the workplace context. Volunteerism has also been thoroughly studied through a multitude of different facets. However, little research could be found bridging the empowerment construct into volunteerism. Therefore, the purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the experience of empowerment among volunteers. Volunteer empowerment was discovered through four primary themes, *make a difference*, *rewarding*, *lifestyle of service*, and *passion*, and three secondary themes, *autonomy*, *awareness*, and *ability*. Other relevant findings included and revolved around volunteer time and balance, challenges, propelling forces, and getting started. Current literature was reviewed and incorporated into the findings of this study. Themes were integrated into a visual display – the empowerment wheel – which shows the experience and scope of volunteer empowerment found in this study. Implications for literature and for practitioners were discussed. Future research directions from this study are vast and were included as part of this study.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my Savior. I would be nowhere without His strength.
May this work be a blessing to Your Kingdom!

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Having worked through a thesis, I now better understand the significance of an acknowledgements section and the number of people that help and support a work along the way. This has been a great undertaking for me, and I have definitely struggled through learning how to conduct and write academic research. I am sincerely grateful for the patience and care of so many in the process, whether through direct help or supporting me from the outside. Without this support, I never would have made it.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

The motivational concept of empowerment has grown in prominence over the last two decades with both researchers and practitioners (Chen, Kirkman, Kanfer, Allen, & Rosen, 2007). The workplace is becoming a place where traditional command and control hierarchies are becoming less appropriate and employees instead take more initiative (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997). With this change, a body of research on empowerment in the workplace has ensued.

Conger and Kanungo (1988) first introduced empowerment to management literature as a combination of psychology and management. Thomas and Velthouse (1990) expanded this construct, and Spreitzer (1995) then modified and developed from Thomas and Velthouse's construct a measure of psychological empowerment which has largely been the basis of empowerment research. Much of this research has supported the theory of empowerment as a tool for greater workplace effectiveness. For example, Chen et al. (2007) found empowerment to mediate the relationship between leadership and individual performance and that "empowerment enables and motivates [individuals] to perform well on such tasks" (pg. 344). In Seibert, Silver, & Randolph's (2004) study, an empowering climate was linked to work-unit performance and psychological empowerment was linked to individual performance and job satisfaction. Empirical support has begun to accumulate showing a relationship between employee empowerment and important work related outcomes (Seibert et al., 2004).

Along with employee empowerment, some researchers have studied other factors of empowerment, including leaders' empowering behaviors (Konczak, Stelly, & Trusty,

2000; Arnold, Arad, Rhoades, & Drasgow, 2000), empowerment in teams (Chen et al., 2007), and empowerment climate (Seibert et al., 2004). With this empirical support, empowerment has become a developed construct worthy of study. However, most research on empowerment has been conducted in the workplace environment. Little research could be found studying the Spreitzer (1995) definition of empowerment in volunteers – one exception being Kulik (2007). However, Kulik's study was focused more on the outcomes of volunteering, where empowerment was merely one possible outcome of many.

Volunteerism, as a broad topic, has been extensively researched. Volunteers come from many different sectors. But to get a sense of the size of the industry, the nonprofit sector alone in the United States was, in the late 1990s, over \$100 billion of the nation's economy (Liao-Troth & Dunn, 1999). Volunteers play such a vital role in today's economy that we must consider their needs and motivations. As Liao-Troth & Dunn stated, "Differences in understanding such a primary question as why volunteers are present can reasonably be expected to have an impact on organizational effectiveness" (pg. 345). Garland, Myers, and Wolfer (2008) explained that the call for volunteers is increasing, yet populations "long known for their service" (pg. 255) such as older women, long-term service volunteers, and retirees, are declining in volunteerism. If indeed the workplace is changing from management's command and control to employees initiating and being creative and still little is known regarding how this shift affects volunteerism, then empirical data is needed to understand the phenomenon of empowerment in the volunteer setting. The possibility of providing greater empowerment for volunteers is important in understanding what organizations can do to

be more effective volunteer managers through enhancing retention, helping to meet the increasing call for volunteers in our society.

When considering a research study, one must consider the context or setting of the research. Research has been conducted not only with a cross-section of volunteers (Liao-Troth & Dunn, 1999), but on many specific groups of volunteers, including but not limited to sports volunteers (Nichols & Ojala, 2009), religious volunteers (Garland, Myers, & Wolfer, 2009; Yeung, 2004a), and medical students (Fletcher & Major, 2004). In studying volunteers, it is not uncommon to study religious volunteers. Garland et al. (2009) state that religious congregations serve as a major source of volunteers, citing multiple studies where church attendance was found to be the best general predictor of involvement in volunteering (Gerard, 1985; Hoge, Zech, McNamara, & Donahue, 1996; Park & Smith, 2000; Wuthnow, 1995; as cited in Garland et al., 2009). Churches send these volunteers to social services, community development, and neighborhood organizing projects (Chaves, Konieczny, Beyerlein, & Barman, 1999), among others. The context of this study is a church, more specifically a Christian church, with participants considered church volunteers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand the experience of empowerment among volunteers. While thorough research has been conducted on volunteer motivation, and similarly on workplace empowerment, little research is found integrating the two. The exploratory nature of qualitative study is appropriate to learn more about empowerment of volunteers.

Many studies have focused on the motivation of volunteers. These studies range widely in methodology from qualitative, such as Yeung's (2004b) phenomenological study, to mixed methods, where Garland et al.'s (2008) interviews followed survey results, and quantitative, as Liao-Troth and Dunn's (1999) study consisted of a survey to understand how to make sense of volunteer motivation. Empowerment, commonly defined as a type of intrinsic task motivation and primarily researched in the past two decades, has constructs, instruments, and empirical data showing its effectiveness in business situations.

Few studies have investigated the integration of empowerment and volunteerism. Kulik (2007) studied responses of volunteers, burnout (negative) and satisfaction (positive), and compared this to different variables, including empowerment through Spreitzer's (1995) psychological empowerment instrument. However, the primary focus of this study was not on empowerment and volunteerism. Further, volunteers are in different situations and are vastly unique from employees for one primary reason – financial benefit, or pay. Therefore, instead of developing a quantitative study using or adapting an instrument from empowerment in the management field to study volunteer empowerment, a qualitative phenomenological study was conducted using a construct of empowerment that integrates management and psychology (Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990) to understand volunteers' experience. The open-ended approach of qualitative research was selected to advance the understanding of the empowerment construct in volunteers with no preset expectations, providing the opportunity to understand the lived experience of volunteers. Hence, the purpose of this study is to understand the experience of empowerment among volunteers.

Research Questions

The research questions were organized, as Creswell (2007) recommends, into one central, overarching question with multiple subquestions. In order to understand the experience of empowerment among volunteers, the following central question and subquestions were developed:

Central Question

- What is the lived experience of empowered volunteers in a Christian church?

Subquestions

- How do volunteers understand the path that led them to volunteer?
- How do volunteers understand their experience as a volunteer?
- How do volunteers understand the impact of their volunteer experience?

Significance of Study

There is great potential in the concept of empowerment. In one of the early works on psychological empowerment, Conger and Kanungo (1988) reported that “studies on leadership and management skills suggest that the practice of empowering subordinates is a principal component of managerial and organizational effectiveness” (pg 471). By the mid-1990’s, there was widespread interest in the concept (Spreitzer, 1995) and since then, evidence has continued to accumulate relating empowerment to work-related outcomes (Seibert et al., 2004). It is important to understand that empowerment is a process of changing the internal beliefs of people, rather than being simply a set of external actions (Conger, 1989).

Paired with the impact of empowerment is the ongoing need of volunteers in society. This calls for continued research and understanding of how volunteers are

motivated. Yeung (2004b) explains motivation as the “essential feature” and the “cornerstone” of volunteerism. The author goes on to give two reasons to study volunteer motivation, describing it as the “core of actualization and continuity of voluntary work” (pg 21) and an “excellent area of research for reflection on, and exploration of, the sociological conception of late-modern commitment and participation” (pg 22). Since empowerment is defined as a type of intrinsic task motivation (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990), empowerment is equally as important to research as motivation. Further, since little has been studied on the empowerment of volunteers, a qualitative approach was utilized to dig deeper into understanding the motivation of volunteers through empowerment than would a quantitative, survey-based approach. This process yielded thick, rich description that will guide and direct future research.

To study the empowerment of volunteers is to begin to discover if the concept of empowerment affects volunteers in similar fashion to work-related settings and outcomes. To study empowerment of volunteers is to explore possibilities of actualization and continuity of voluntary work and to explore the current trends of society, commitment, and participation, what Yeung (2004b) stated as late-modern commitment and participation.

Implications for Organizations with Volunteers

Results of this study provide knowledge for organizations with volunteers and volunteer coordinators. Many non-profit organizations, social services agencies, and other organizations utilize volunteers heavily, and could benefit from better understanding volunteer empowerment. This study explored what makes volunteers feel empowered. Results of the study can help guide leaders on how they can facilitate

greater empowerment among their volunteers. Whether the leader is a volunteer or paid staff person, leading only one or many, a greater understanding of empowerment of volunteers could likely lead to positive outcomes for the organization through enhanced volunteer retention and volunteer satisfaction. Results of this study suggest ways to develop empowerment in volunteers and hence provide increased volunteer retention and volunteer satisfaction.

Implications for Theory and Literature

The results of this study have further advanced the theory of empowerment by expanding the growing body of knowledge of empowerment and bridging it into the volunteer sector. This study has provided insight into how empowerment plays out in volunteers and suggests reasoning to consider modification of a concept map for volunteer empowerment. As a qualitative study, the results provide ample direction and possibility for further research of volunteers. Further, this study provides meaning to empowerment in the workplace context, for what empowers volunteers to be involved with no obligation could logically provide deeper insight into what empowers volunteers in a workplace.

Delimitations

Several delimitations were developed. A small Midwestern city was chosen to be the focus of the data collection. The study was further refined to only volunteers within a Christian church, as was the primary researcher's chosen area on which to focus. Additionally, volunteers were identified based upon selection by a church leader/pastor, and may not have represented all empowered volunteers. Since psychological empowerment can only truly be identified by the participant and not by the leader, it is

possible that participants may not truly experience psychological empowerment.

However, it is the belief of the researchers that the data supported that each participant was indeed empowered.

This small, purposive sample was meant to bring rich, qualitative data to the specific phenomenon in question. As qualitative research, this study cannot be generalized to volunteers as a whole or these churches. Further, as a qualitative study, no basis was taken for factors such as the leader's style, organizational culture or structure, size, or denomination, or participant personality style or leadership preferences, among others. It is recognized that any of these factors could impact the results of the study, creating additional variables that could have changed the participants' lived experience of psychological empowerment.

Biases

Understanding researcher biases is a key aspect to qualitative research. The researcher in this study has heavy involvement in volunteering (the who), empowerment (the what), and churches (the context). Following Creswell's (2007) and Moustakas's (1994, as cited in Creswell, 2007) recommendation for bracketing experiences so that the phenomenon can be perceived freshly, the researcher reflected on and logged past experiences so that views were identified and appropriately bracketed out. Further, after proposing and moving forward with the research project, the researcher took a step away from literature so that past knowledge would not affect the analysis of the study.

The combination of experience and a passion for volunteering, empowerment, and churches provided the necessary inspiration and motivation for the researcher to conduct this study. However, these experiences have indeed shaped and molded the researcher.

This may unintentionally affect the study. The researcher identified past experiences and recognized how they may affect the study, and made every effort to set aside, or bracket, any preconceived notions about volunteering, empowerment, churches, and how they interact throughout the duration of the study.

Creswell (2007) identifies four paradigms or worldviews from which qualitative research is approached: postpositivism, social constructivism, advocacy/participatory, and pragmatism. A paradigm is a set of beliefs that guide action. It is important to consider one's paradigm because it will guide the design and research of the study. The social constructivism paradigm is a worldview where individuals seek to understand the world and their surroundings (Creswell, 2007, pg. 20). With social constructivism, researchers seek to understand the complexity of situations rather than narrow a meaning to fit into a few ideas. In these types of studies, researchers will make interpretations, shaped by their own experiences, based upon the responses of participants to open-ended questions describing contexts, life settings, and meaning. This paradigm guides the approach to this study. As Creswell states, "We will see the constructivist worldview manifest in phenomenological studies, in which individuals describe their experiences" (pg. 21).

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions apply:

Calling: work or a social function one is “called” to by God, requiring God-given gifts, skills, or talents (Veith, 1999).

Christian: of or relating to the religion of Christianity (Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary and Thesaurus, 2006).

Church: a group of persons assembled for worship; facility for worship (Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary and Thesaurus, 2006).

Denomination: authority and agency structure within a particular religion (Chaves, 1993), holding similar theological beliefs.

Empowerment: empowerment is a type of intrinsic task motivation manifested in four cognitions - *Meaning*, *Competence*, *Self-determination*, and *Impact* (Spreitzer, 1995).

Meaning is the relationship between requirements of the volunteer role and one’s values.

Competence is self-efficacy and belief in one’s ability to do volunteer role’s tasks. *Self-determination* is the ability to make decisions on task methods, pace, and effort. *Impact* is the ability to shape strategic and administrative outcomes in the organization.

Secular: nonreligious, pertaining to things not related to faith or religion (Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary and Thesaurus, 2006).

Volunteer: a person who “recognizes a need and chooses to respond to it in ways that extend beyond basic social obligations, motivated by personal responsibility rather than monetary or other personal profit” (Garland et al., 2009, pg. 23).

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

This chapter focuses on the current literature relevant to this study. As Creswell (2007) states, “The strongest and most scholarly rationale for a study... comes from the scholarly literature” (pg. 102). In qualitative research, opinions differ on how thoroughly literature is reviewed before the study, but most researchers believe some review is necessary to provide rationale for the study and position the study appropriately in ongoing literature (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). With that in mind, this literature review sought to accomplish three things: search the literature to discover a need and ensure that this study is not a duplicate of a previous study, provide reasoning and theoretical framework for the study, and provide definitions necessary for the phenomenon of study. In doing so, this review explores scholarly literature regarding the topics of empowerment, volunteerism, and volunteer empowerment.

Empowerment

The phenomenon of empowerment has a growing body of literature in the academic fields of management as well as psychology. Conger and Kanungo (1988) were among the first to provide a framework, based heavily from self-efficacy and Bandura’s (1977, 1986) work, to bridge the two fields of management and psychology and provide relevance to management theory. Conger and Kanungo (1988) cited numerous sources (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Kanter, 1979, 1983; McClelland, 1975; as cited in Conger & Kanungo, 1988) that “suggest that the practice of empowering subordinates is a principal component of managerial and organizational effectiveness” (Conger & Kanungo, 1988, pg. 471). To this point, however, empowerment had largely

only meant delegation (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). These authors were the first to propose empowerment as a motivational construct, meaning in its simplest form, “to enable.” They proposed a construct and definition of empowerment to be “a process of enhancing feelings of self-efficacy among organizational members through the identification of conditions that foster powerlessness and through their removal by both formal organizational practices and informal techniques of providing efficacy information” (Conger & Kanungo, 1988, pg. 474).

Shortly thereafter, Thomas and Velthouse (1990) built on Conger and Kanungo’s (1988) work and developed a model of empowerment that has become well-accepted and is the backbone construct of most psychological empowerment research today. Thomas and Velthouse’s model defined empowerment as a specific type of motivation – intrinsic task motivation. Next, it built on the idea of self-efficacy in empowerment, but found self-efficacy to be insufficient (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990), adding other elements to the definition. The four cognitions of empowerment were defined as impact, competence (self-efficacy in Conger and Kanungo’s (1988) construct), meaningfulness, and choice. Essentially, Thomas and Velthouse took Conger and Kanungo’s construct further. Thomas and Velthouse saw stimuli of causal events not as objective, but subjective, requiring the empowered person to interpret empowerment, hence the term psychological empowerment.

Spreitzer (1995) took the work of Conger and Kanungo (1988) and Thomas and Velthouse (1990) and developed a measure. First, the author renamed two of Thomas and Velthouse’s cognitions, calling “choice” *Self-determination* and shortening “meaningfulness” to *Meaning*, making the list of four cognitions *Meaning, Competence,*

Self-determination, and *Impact*. *Meaning* was defined as “The value of a work goal or a purpose, judged in relation to an individual’s own ideals or standards” (Spreitzer, 1995, pg. 1443). *Competence*, the cognition based from Conger and Kanungo’s self-efficacy empowerment construct, was defined by Spreitzer as “an individual’s belief in his or her capability to perform activities with skill” (pg. 1443). *Self-determination*, what Thomas & Velthouse called choice, was characterized as “an individual’s sense of having choice in initiating and regulating actions” (Spreitzer, 1995, pg. 1443). Finally, *Impact* was identified as “The degree to which an individual can influence strategic, administrative, or operating outcomes at work” (Spreitzer, 1995, pg. 1443-1444). As Spreitzer says, “Together, these four cognitions reflect an active, rather than a passive, orientation to a work role” (pg. 1444). The instrument in this study was developed to measure the construct of psychological empowerment and the four cognitions of employees in a “workplace context” (pg. 1442). This measure has been used in multiple studies since being developed, including Kulik (2007), Spreitzer, De Janasz, and Quinn (1999), and Seibert, Silver, and Randolph (2004), among others.

Studying Empowerment

From this core of research, many studies have been conducted. Some studies have expanded on the research by taking the same construct and studying it for different outcomes (Liden, Wayne, & Sparrowe, 2000; Spreitzer, Kizilos, & Nason, 1997; Spreitzer, De Janasz, & Quinn, 1999). Other studies have looked beyond the person to other factors, such as leaders’ empowering behaviors (Konczak, Stelly, & Trusty, 2000; Arnold, Arad, Rhoades, & Drasgow, 2000), empowerment in teams (Chen, Kirkman, Kanfer, Allen, & Rosen, 2007), and empowerment climate (Seibert, Silver, & Randolph,

2004). As Seibert et al. state, “Empirical support has begun to accumulate regarding the relationship of employee empowerment to important work-related outcomes” (pg. 332) and they cite the Liden, Wayne, and Sparrow, Spreitzer, Kizilos, and Nason, and Spreitzer (1995) studies as some examples. When considering this construct for volunteers, especially interesting are results connecting work satisfaction outcomes to the cognition of meaning (Spreitzer, Kizilos, & Nason, 1997). The authors explain the relationship as “critical” (pg. 697).

While Arnold et al. (2000) only developed an instrument and did not test leader behaviors against work outcomes, Konczak et al. (2000) did show that their Leader Empowerment Behavior Questionnaire (LEBQ) scales as well as psychological empowerment were related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Chen et al.’s (2007) article found empowerment to be a mediating variable between leadership and performance. Seibert et al.’s (2004) study showed not only a positive relationship between empowerment climate and work unit performance, but also a positive relationship between psychological empowerment and individual performance as well as job satisfaction. Support is growing for the notion of the empowerment construct, not only for psychological empowerment but also for empowerment in other forms, to be a predictor of positive outcomes at work.

Volunteerism

Research on volunteerism is thorough and deep. Since the definition of psychological empowerment used in this study defines empowerment as a type of intrinsic task motivation and since this is a qualitative study, the literature reviewed prior to the collection of data was limited to studies that gave insight to why volunteers

volunteer. This review's primary purpose is to understand different approaches guiding research of volunteer motivation, as well as provide a rationale for conducting this study.

Studying volunteer motivation is important. Yeung (2004b) states that motivation of volunteers is the "cornerstone" (pg. 21) of volunteerism. Liao-Troth and Dunn (1999) argue not only the importance of, but also the lack of, research addressing "the interaction between nonprofit managers and the volunteers they recruit, train, and develop" (pg. 346). Gooch (2005), who studied environmental volunteers, qualitatively studied volunteers in order to "gain a deep understanding of the collective contributions of these experiences to their local groups" (pg. 6).

Yeung (2004b) conducted a phenomenological study on the motivations of volunteers. Interestingly, though, this study sheds little light on empowerment, instead describing results through four dimensions of an octagon model: getting-giving, continuity-newness, distance-proximity, and thought-action. Garland, Myers, and Wolfer (2009) studied the motivations and challenges of Protestant Christian volunteers in community social service programs and found that the most common motivations were response to God, response to human need, beneficial relationships, and personal benefits. The most common challenges volunteers faced included boundaries, fear, time, overwhelming need, and burnout. Burnout was defined as "discouragement as a result of many demands with what appears to be little result" (pg. 33-34) and was seen as the result of "not successfully addressing the challenges of boundaries, fears, time, and overwhelming need" (pg.34). Interestingly, Kulik (2007) studied volunteer responses to volunteering, with a positive response being satisfaction and the negative response being burnout.

Volunteer Empowerment

Within the research on empowerment and volunteer motivation, little research can be found that links empowerment with volunteerism. One exception is Kulik's (2007) aforementioned study, where he studied multiple factors to understand responses to volunteering. The author used Spreitzer's (1995) measure to study psychological empowerment. Results for empowerment were positive, showing that participants with high levels of empowerment expressed low levels of burnout, high levels of satisfaction with volunteer activity, and high levels of satisfaction with the rewards of being a volunteer. This study, while needing further support, offers promise that empowerment of volunteers will provide positive outcomes similar to those found in the business world. It should be noted, however, that Spreitzer's (1995) instrument was designed for the work environment. Further research, such as this study, are necessary to better understand empowerment in a volunteer context. Qualitative studies can provide the open-ended approach necessary to look at other factors that have been studied by researchers in the work environment, such as leader behaviors, teams, and organizational climate.

Conclusion

Many questions exist regarding volunteerism and empowerment. While empowerment has been studied in many different ways in the work environment, including through leader behaviors, work teams, empowerment climate, and psychological empowerment, little is known about empowerment in volunteer settings. Since the research on volunteerism and empowerment is still in the early stages, this study utilized a qualitative approach exploring the phenomenon of empowerment to expand the literature, providing an open-ended approach seeking to uncover factors of

empowerment unique to volunteerism. This study researched what aspects beyond psychological empowerment are in need of immediate study. Would Spreitzer's (1995) empowerment measure effectively assess volunteers' empowerment? How do volunteers experience empowerment? How do they make meaning of this experience? What factors do volunteers discuss that affect their feelings of empowerment? The results of this study give clues to these questions, and subsequently guide future research and the development or modification of measures specific to volunteer empowerment. Volunteer and nonprofit sectors can benefit from a body of research understanding what makes volunteers feel empowered – be it teams, climate, leadership or other, and if empowerment affects volunteers' satisfaction, reduces burnout, or increases volunteer task outcomes. This review of literature revealed this need, and this study was the first step at answering this call.

CHAPTER III

Methods

The primary objectives of qualitative research are exploration and discovery (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). Qualitative research focuses on the exploration of how people make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness (Patton, 2002). It is this desire for exploration that drives the methods and design of this study. Phenomenology is a description of one or more person's consciousness and experience of a phenomenon (Johnson and Christensen, 2008). A phenomenological study should describe the meaning that several individuals make of their lived experiences of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). The phenomenon can be an emotion, a relationship, marriage, job, program, organization, or culture (Patton, 2002), among others. The goal of phenomenological studies is to understand the participant's perspectives and experiences through entering his or her inner world (Johnson and Christensen, 2008). The outcome is then a rich description of what is found to be common among the participants as they experience the phenomenon, though one should be cautioned that phenomenological studies are not explanations or analyses (Creswell, 2007). Phenomenological studies should then focus on both what participants experience and how they experience it (Patton, 2002).

Creswell (2007) describes four philosophical perspectives in phenomenology. All four perspectives will be taken into consideration for this study. However, the fourth perspective is one the researcher feels is most important and relies most heavily upon for developing the study.

The first perspective is “a return to the traditional tasks of philosophy” (Creswell, 2007, pg. 58). In this way, phenomenological studies are to search for wisdom, similar to the Greek conception of philosophy. Even as much modern research has limited itself to exploring the world by empirical means, termed scientism, phenomenology attempts to bring back the search for understanding.

The second perspective is that phenomenology is to be a philosophy without presuppositions. In this way, the approach is then to “suspend all judgments about what is real – the ‘natural attitude’ – until they are founded on a more certain basis” (Creswell, 2007, pg. 58-59). Another common term for this concept is *epoche*, which means bracketing. The researcher is to bracket his or her opinions and set them aside as much as possible. Bracketing permits the researcher to gain clarity from her own perceptions (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). In this way, the researcher attempts to have no biases and bring no predetermined conclusions. Instead, the researcher remains open until the data provides a more certain basis. While there is no way to confirm that this has occurred, the researcher has taken steps to address this concern. A section on biases is included in chapter one and the researcher reflected on experiences with the phenomenon, the participants, and the setting of the study through journaling.

The third philosophical perspective is what is termed the intentionality of consciousness. With this concept, “Reality of an object is inextricably related to one’s consciousness of it” (Creswell, 2007, pg. 59). In order to be aware of this perspective, the researcher will provide opportunity for participants to describe the phenomenon as they understand it.

The fourth philosophical perspective flows directly from the preceding perspective. This perspective is called the refusal of the subject-object dichotomy (Creswell, 2007). These perspectives relate to phenomenology in that the reality of a phenomenon to a participant is based upon how the participant consciously perceives the phenomenon. Or, as Creswell states, “The reality of an object is only perceived within the meaning of the experience of an individual” (Creswell, 2007, pg. 59). The phenomenon, then, is the reality of one’s life-world, or one’s world of immediate experience. Phenomenological studies attempt to gain access to individuals’ life-worlds (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). As is related to the fourth perspective, the researcher developed an open-ended interview protocol that directly seeks to understand the lived experience of volunteers.

These four philosophical perspectives provide framework to guide the design of this study. As stated above, the first phenomenological perspective explains a return to traditional tasks of philosophy and of seeking knowledge. Therefore, so the researcher could explore and understand what empowerment means to participants and to yield rich data and descriptions from the research, the open-ended design of a phenomenological study was chosen.

Research Questions

The research questions will be organized, as Creswell (2007) recommends, into one central, overarching question with multiple subquestions. In order to understand the experience of empowerment among volunteers, the following central question and subquestions are presented:

Central Question

- What is the lived experience of empowered volunteers in a Christian church?

Subquestions

- How do volunteers understand the path that led them to volunteer?
- How do volunteers understand their experience as a volunteer?
- How do volunteers understand the impact of their volunteer experience?

Sample

Purposeful sampling is when “The enquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (Creswell, 2007, pg. 125). Purposeful, or purposive, sampling is used to find empowered volunteers in order to obtain rich information on empowerment. Specifically, for this study, the sample included volunteers of Christian churches. In order to find empowered volunteers of churches, the definition of volunteers used in this study from Garland, Myers, and Wolfer (2009), along with behaviors that exemplify empowerment based from Spreitzer’s (1995) definition of psychological empowerment, were provided to the pastors of three churches. The phone script and following email script can be found in appendix A. These three pastors then identified volunteers that fit the definition of volunteer and that demonstrated behaviors that exemplify empowered volunteers. The following definition of a volunteer was provided to pastors:

A volunteer is someone who...

- Recognizes a need
- Chooses to respond to need in ways beyond basic social obligations

- Is motivated by personal responsibility rather than monetary or other personal profit

The following list of exhibited behaviors was also provided to pastors for identification of empowered volunteers:

Volunteers who...

- Find meaning in their volunteer responsibilities
- Believe in their abilities to conduct volunteer tasks
- Make decisions on task methods, pace, and effort
- Shape strategic and administrative outcomes in the organization

In order to further the purposefulness of the sample, further restrictions were placed upon the selection of participants. In order to participate, volunteers must:

- Occupy a defined leadership role within the church
- Have held a volunteer role that meets the above criteria for a period of at least one year

Limiting the study to only volunteers who have a leadership role in the church aimed to provide the study with volunteers who are involved in enough activities and responsibilities to provide rich information. Volunteers not in a leadership role may not have enough relevant experiences to merit the study of empowerment. Finally, requiring that participants have been in a role for a period of at least one year aimed to provide the participants enough experiences so that quality data would be collected from the study.

Converse to limiting volunteers, purposive sampling also strives to find a diverse sample within the purposive criteria with factors not purposefully limited. In order to attain variation in the sample, participants with variation in these factors were sought:

- Gender
- Age
- Denomination
- Size of church

This purposive sampling strategy provided rich, meaningful data on volunteers and how they experience empowerment. Four churches were contacted, and three churches were willing to participate. As such, all participants came from one of three churches, three participants from each of two churches, and two participants from one church. There were a total of eight participants in this study.

All three churches were from the same medium-sized Midwestern city. Churches varied in size from average attendance of one church less than 500, one church 500 to 2,000, and one with greater than 2,000. Each church was part of a different denomination or sector of Christianity, but all shared in Christianity as their religion. Participants ranged in age from the mid-thirties to mid-seventies. There were three male and five female participants. Weekly volunteer hours ranged from three hours to nearly 20 hours per week. All participants were married and had children, though the children varied in age from toddlers and younger to grown children living away from their parents' home on their own. Volunteer roles varied greatly, as did responsibilities and expectations of each role. Involvement in community activities beyond church varied, and the amount of involvement within the church varied, though all were relatively involved.

Data Collection

Interviews were conducted as individual, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews. Individual interviews are interviews where the researcher interviews to ask questions to

and record answers from only one participant in the study at a time (Creswell, 2008). Individual interviewing is recommended as a characteristic of qualitative research because it allows the researcher to be close to the work (Johnson & Christensen, 2008) and is a way to be in the natural setting of the data (Creswell, 2007). Semi-structured means that an interview protocol is provided but some flexibility is maintained to allow for the open-ended nature of qualitative research. Interviews were conducted until saturation was reached. Saturation occurs when the researcher has identified major themes and no new information can add to the list of themes nor provide any further detail (Creswell, 2008). After six interviews, the researcher felt that saturation had been reached, but continued to interview to confirm. After eight interviews, the researcher confidently concluded that saturation had been reached.

The phone script and email script for contacting participants can be found in appendix B. Before beginning the interviews, participants signed a consent form informing them of their rights as a participant. A copy of the consent form is available in appendix C. Interviews were audio-recorded by permission of the participant and the researcher took brief notes of the conversation as well as observed and recorded major nonverbal cues, including any distractions. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim by the researcher. At this time, pseudonyms were given to each participant and their member church. Interviews took between thirty-one and seventy-five minutes, and the average length was fifty minutes. Participants received a copy of the questions, not including probes, at least forty-eight hours in advance of the interview.

Data Collection Procedures

Data was collected through semi-structured, individual interviews. For these interviews, as Creswell (2007) recommends, an interview protocol was designed by the researcher. The protocol was reviewed by research professionals. The interview protocol questions were established in order to answer the research question and subquestions.

The following are the questions that were designed to answer these research questions:

1. Please tell me as much as you are willing about how you came to your current volunteer role.
2. Please describe, in as much detail as you would like, your volunteer experience.
3. Please describe how your volunteer experience affects other aspects of your life.
4. Do you think of yourself as empowered? What does this term mean to you?
5. Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience of being an empowered volunteer?

The interview protocol can be found in appendix D and the demographics sheet can be found in appendix E.

Validity

Several forms of data validation were used in this study to provide accurate, rigorous research. In the data collection process, member checking was completed. Member checking involves “taking data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions back to the participants so that they can judge the accuracy and credibility of the account” (Creswell, 2007, pg. 208). Member checking was completed immediately after the interview. The researcher summarized the notes to the participant and asked for feedback. This occurred while the recorder was still on, so that any new information could still be recorded and transcribed. Further, it provided via the audio and transcript

the participants' raw feedback of summarized points. Participants were also provided a summary of their interview via email and invited to provide any feedback. Finally, participants were provided the opportunity to see a draft of the report, asked to give feedback, and invited to provide alternative language (Creswell, 2007, pg. 209), though no changes were requested by participants.

Data Analysis

Specifically with phenomenology and following Creswell (2007) and Johnson and Christensen (2008), the researcher took the transcribed interviews and coded the data, looking for significant statements. These significant statements were organized into 28 themes or meaning units and condensed into final themes – four primary and three secondary. The original 28 meaning units can be found in appendix F. From there, the fundamental structure of the experience was written in rich description, as recommended by Johnson and Christensen.

For reliability and validity, the researcher utilized a second researcher to code and analyze the data, providing triangulation of coding. Triangulation provides the researcher corroborating evidence through the use of multiple sources, methods, investigators, and theories (Creswell, 2007). The second coder, after signing a confidentiality agreement (found in appendix G) transcribed two of eight transcriptions, and inter-rater reliability was 88.6%. This percentage figure was calculated by adding the total number of agreed codes of each person, divided by the total number of codes. It is possible to conduct a kappa reliability statistic; however, it was determined that a standard percentage agreement was adequate. Creswell refers to Miles and Huberman's (1994, as cited in Creswell, 2007) standard of 80%, and this standard was exceeded. Having a second

coder provided greater evidence of codes and themes by providing a crosscheck for the primary coder, therefore making the analysis more valid.

Ethical Considerations

With the nature of qualitative research, participants are asked to share a large amount of personal information. It is with the greatest protection that the researcher treated the participants and information provided. Participants were asked to sign an informed consent form and were given pseudonyms to protect their identity. Further, the churches, pastors, and other volunteers involved or mentioned were given pseudonyms or were not mentioned. Reference to these parties other than the primary participants was used only as necessary, as to minimize the possibility of someone “figuring out” who is who in the study.

Further, as a student at a research institution, the researcher had a checks-and-balances system in place in the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB provided ethical protection for the participants in the study. All researchers involved in the study were required to have completed training on ethical behaviors of research. Once this was completed, the process of developing an IRB proposal began. The proposal required the researcher to report all aspects of the study, including plans for security of audio recordings, consideration of risks and benefits to participants, confidentiality plan and participant identification, and copies of all documents used, including written consent forms, interview protocol, and all contact (phone scripts, emails, etc) used to contact participants. The proposal was then reviewed by the IRB. Documentation of the final approved document is in the consent form in appendix C.

CHAPTER IV

Findings

Introduction to Participants

This study consists of eight exploratory interviews with volunteers of three different churches. The following is a brief description of each participant.

Penelope is a full-time mom. She loves music, volunteering, and supporting her children's activities. Penelope is involved in many activities and volunteer roles. She describes herself as outgoing and organized and "loves people of all ages."

Charles is a retired electrical technician. He especially loves the church services, singing during service, and helping make the services effective from behind-the-scenes. He calls himself a "multiple-task person" who sees where facility needs exist in his church and takes action to get them done. Charles talked repeatedly about how thankful he is to be able to be retired so he can volunteer more at his church.

Hayley describes herself as a strong-willed, independent person. Under hobbies she lists sports. Hayley especially enjoys the freedom from guilt of expectations she experiences as a volunteer. She has spent several years working and now enjoys being able to come and go freely with her volunteer responsibilities.

Daniel enjoys computers, camping, and reading. He is a self-described natural leader who often has ideas about the processes he works with. This has led to him quickly gaining more and more responsibility as a volunteer. He describes himself as hard working, dependable, and easy-going.

Paisleigh is a graduate student and part-time employee for her university. She loves reading and loves to travel. Though she has not volunteered her whole life, now

she cannot imagine life without volunteering. Relationships are an essential part of her life, and she describes herself as a friendly, outgoing, and committed person.

Kate cares deeply about others. She is a professional, but spends most of her free time dedicated to the benefit of her church and faith. She describes herself as a “mother, wife, friend, mentor, and accountability partner” – one who encourages her friends and family.

Kyle has a passion for developing others. He often finds himself overcommitted but still finds time for his family. His hobbies include reading and hiking. He talks constantly about his desire to help others learn and grow, and how he loves to build others.

Tammie loves to serve and be with people. She finds great value in loving and caring for others, and feels that you always get more back than you give. She cannot imagine what life would be like without spending significant time serving. She describes herself as a “wife, mom, and grandma who loves God and desires to be a godly woman.”

Discovering Themes

In the process of analyzing the eight interviews, the researcher first coded the data. From there, the researcher compiled the codes, including the supporting sentences, into preliminary themes. In order to not miss any information, 28 initial themes were identified and can be found in appendix F. From these original lists, the researcher utilized a concept map to begin grouping similar themes together. As an example, the preliminary themes of independence, flexibility, guilt-free, and freedom within vision/guidelines were combined into the theme *autonomy*. Upon condensing themes, four primary themes and three secondary themes were found.

Summary of Themes

From the interviews with these eight participants, several themes emerged. These themes were arranged by their prominence: primary and secondary. Four primary themes were evident – themes labeled *make a difference*, *lifestyle of service*, *rewarding*, and *passion*. Three secondary themes were also found: *awareness*, *ability*, and *autonomy*. Interestingly, the primary themes all seem to be internal or within the volunteers. The secondary themes were more factors of the volunteer function. Finally, there were some other important findings that, while they may not have been themes, carry significance, and therefore will also be discussed in the findings.

Primary Theme One: Make a Difference

The most prevalent theme in this study was participants' desire to make a difference in the world. This theme was communicated in a multitude of ways, as some communicated volunteering as providing purpose in their lives, others focused on life not being all about me, while some focused on the importance of the impact on others, and still yet some participants talked about helping others through either an experience similar to theirs or helping to enjoy something they loved. Every participant interviewed talked about making a difference in the world and with those around them in one way or another. This came through as a deep purpose to do what was right, to help others as one would want to be helped, and to see that more existed in this world than just themselves.

A few participants talked specifically about an understanding that, as Penelope stated, "it's not just about me me me." Kyle discussed growing up serving and learning about the needs of the world. He states, "I've had the idea that there's more to the world than myself for a long time." Daniel talks about devoting his Wednesday nights to

service and about the importance of doing for others. “It’s filling a need so that others can be served. And I think I tend to do that in my everyday life whether it be a neighbor that needs something or...” Further, this was so important that participants saw the need to pass this perspective along. Kyle works with college students and talks of continually challenging them to see this as well. He explains to them:

Yes, part of your calling right now as a college student is to do well academically. But understand there’s a much bigger world out there that God has put you in than just a little sphere of study, eat, sleep, go to class.

Penelope talks about the importance of teaching her children about the importance of this aspect. She explains:

I also feel as a mom it’s important for your kids to know that you don’t always put yourself first. There are other people out there and taking them down to the city mission and help them work down there, help them stock the shelves, help them sort through clothes and toys and do those kinds of things... You are empowering your children to know that there are people out there that have just had things happen to them. They are not bad people, they have just had some really bad, call it a string of bad luck.

Similar to the concept of the world being about more than just oneself, some participants communicated a strong emphasis on doing things that impact others. Kate communicated this quite clearly. When responding to the question of what she liked best, she responded simply, “Making a difference in people’s lives.” Her dedication to this is evident, as she describes her patience in the process:

It's certainly not out of reason that it might take a year to see change in how people respond to people and experiences in their lives. And to see the growth in some of the people that have been through [our program], it's just an amazing thing.

One of the most intriguing aspects of this theme is people's desire to make a difference through helping others in a situation they identify with or once struggled with. Regarding struggles, Hayley identified with first-time parents, and described a desire to help others parent their first child through school and how her own experiences played into her motivations. "I am just trying to help the first time parent. I wish someone would have told me that when [my first child] was that age. Instead of me trying to figure out what was going on." Kate shares a similar sentiment, "It's basically wanting to help people get through what we did in a more Christian and effective manner. We really didn't have any resources; we just kind of had to barge through it on our own."

Along with a desire to help people through a similar struggle, several were motivated to make a difference through providing the opportunity for others to experience something they have experienced. Charles is a man who loves worship time, and loves to sing. While he prefers not to be the person in front of people, he connected his behind-the-scenes work to providing others the opportunity to enjoy worship.

I helped put in the big screens for the projectors and wired up the cabling and so forth for that, [set up] cameras and things of that nature. So that helps other people to enjoy their worship time. That is, I think, the reason I do it.

Tammie's highest point in the week is worship service on Sunday. She expressed her sincere desire to be a part of this for others in this statement:

It's just delightful; it's a tremendous experience to be able to see people that have just come from worshipping God and are hopefully at about the highest point in the week and be a part of that. It's just a tremendous experience to be able to do as far as I'm concerned.

When Kyle reflected on why he worked with college students, he refers to "looking at what's made the biggest impact in my life." He explained, "It's been college ministry. So then the desire became I want others to have that opportunity."

Intertwined with this desire to make a difference or to impact others was a concept of purpose or meaning. Charles described his handyman role as a "more relaxed effort, but *essential*." When referring to working with a clothing distribution center, Penelope stated:

You're like, they get it. This isn't all in vain. We're not bringing this stuff down here and people are just saying 'I'm down on my luck so give me what I want.' You know, these are genuine people who are down on their luck.

Hayley described her volunteer experience as providing a purpose. While describing welcoming people to her church, Paisleigh stated that it "just means something to me." The participants in this study find purpose in their volunteer roles.

Ultimately, these volunteers had a drive to make a difference in the world around them. They expressed a deep desire to help others and care for others. As Tammie stated, "You are doing it out of love and care and compassion for someone."

Primary Theme Two: Rewarding

One of the most surprising themes was the notion of the incredible amount of reward the participants felt from volunteering. Nearly synonymous with the word rewarding was the notion of a deep satisfaction the participants felt in volunteering. Every participant in the study talked about the rewards of volunteering in some way. This feeling was so strong to the participants that many described themselves as fortunate to volunteer, thankful to give their time to someone or something else! The impression that volunteering gives back far more than what one gives was commonly heard from participants. Also, the relationships built in volunteering were another source of deep reward or satisfaction. Further, a couple participants connected this rewarding nature of volunteering to their self-worth.

These participants derived a deep sense of satisfaction and reward from volunteering. Since it is not monetary or tangible, some participants had difficulty explaining it, as can be noted from some of the quotes. Penelope stated the core of this theme very typically as she refers to helping others out, “Just to bring a smile to someone’s face – it’s just rewarding in a ton of ways.” This “rewarding in a ton of ways” was a common sentiment. Tammie finds serving as “absolutely the most rewarding thing next to being a wife and a mom. It’s just the best. I just love it.” Several participants felt so strongly about their positive experiences that they wondered why others did not get more involved. Daniel explained:

I’m surprised that more people don’t volunteer. As rewarding as it is to me, you know, the tradeoff of the time that I invest versus the reward that I get is to me a no brainer. Why... why isn’t everybody doing this?

Over half of the participants explicitly stated in some way that they are fortunate to volunteer. Two participants were stay at home moms that multiple times stated their gratitude for the opportunity to stay at home and be able to volunteer. Hayley said, “I think of myself as grateful that I’m allowed to do that kind of stuff. I’m grateful for the experiences that I’m able to do.” It is obvious the rewards and satisfaction of her volunteerism have affected her. She went on to talk about how she is doing something she never thought she would enjoy, “When I was growing up there was no way in heck that I thought I would be working with kids. I liked kids, but I didn’t really – teaching was not even slightly something that I enjoyed.”

Paisleigh attempts to describe the gift of volunteering when she talks about what volunteering means to her:

Um it’s, it’s uh, it’s hard to explain. It’s sort of like it’s, it’s like a gift that somebody’s been able to give me even though I feel like my volunteerism is a gift that I’m, I feel like I’m giving, it actually is something that I feel like is given to me because I get opportunities that I would not have gotten if I was just coming showing up on a Sunday. It’s, it’s about being a part of somebody else’s life in a in a different way I guess that’s the part that affects me.

Finally, Tammie stated, “I look at myself as being very thankful that I have an opportunity to be a volunteer at a church. I could not imagine not doing that.”

Several participants talked about the multiplication of rewards received in return for volunteering. Kyle stated:

My volunteer experience, as far as what I do, what I get out of it... first of all, I always have found whenever I'm in any ministry at church I don't think I've ever done anything that I didn't feel like I, by far, got more out of it than the people that I served. It's just something that always comes back ten-fold.

Tammie resonated with this sentiment. She spoke, convinced, "You'll always get more back when you're serving. You'll always get more back than you give when you're serving, you always do. Always."

Relationships were another source of deep reward for some participants. Charles stated the reward of working with others for the everyday needs of the church and members as an enrichment of his life. Referring to those he knows and works with while volunteering, he stated, "I feel that my life has been enriched more because of those people." Paisleigh lives for relationships, and finds ways to interweave the rewards of volunteering in with the benefit of her friendships. She explained:

Getting involved has given me more opportunities to build relationships with others. A lot of times my husband and I will get involved in something together, or friends with whom I already enjoy spending time with – we'll do it as something that we do together.

Finally, volunteerism seemed to bring a peace to some volunteers. Kate talked about how volunteering affects her life. She stated, "So in summary, it's helped me be more at peace with my own life. And with what happens to me. It's also helped me be an example to other people around me because I can demonstrate what I've learned."

Tammie concurred, “I find it to just be absolutely amazing. I mean it gives you such a peace.”

Primary Theme Three: Lifestyle of Service

Seven of eight participants also shared a third theme – a *lifestyle of service*. This theme represents the idea that being a volunteer and serving others has become an integral part of who they are. Serving and volunteering is just a part of their lives that bleeds out into other aspects of their lives. Some participants described their volunteer experiences and responsibilities as a calling. The notion of calling is similar in some ways to the theme *make a difference*, where participants talked about having a purpose for what they do. Yet, the *lifestyle of service* theme is distinct from *make a difference* in that the lifestyle theme presents a theme of service in other aspects of life as well as in their volunteer role.

Interestingly, this *lifestyle of service* has for some been a part of their lives from early on, but others have found it later in life. Charles talked about it being instilled in him as a child from his mother:

I believe that stems back from the time when I was at home. My mother was a Sunday school teacher and she played the organ for services. And she was in many organizations, ladies organizations at church... it just became part of my life that this is what we do in our family. And I kind of believe that was instilled in me as a little child. And I never really balked at doing that, I enjoy it. If there's a need for my assistance I am willing to do that just because it's the thing to do.

As discussed in the Make a Difference theme, Kyle also has had the idea of volunteerism for some time when he stated that he's "had the idea that there's more to the world than himself for a long time." He went on:

In addition to being involved in church early on as a child and as a teenager, helping in various ministries as an usher or in [another] ministry also gave me the idea that part of being who God wants you to be involves serving other people.

For Penelope, music is a large reason for her volunteering. She stated, "Music has just always been... um... a part of my life."

Some participants stumbled upon volunteering. This is the case for Paisleigh. Even so, she sees it as a part of life now. She reflected her life as a volunteer and how she came to this point:

Volunteering has been... it's just kind of like a part of who I am now. Before I would have not really thought of myself as, I guess, somebody who would enjoy volunteering. But it seems like the more opportunities that I've had to get involved then the more I want to be involved. And that's why a lot of times I've looked back and thought, you know, the what if's about what if somebody wouldn't have asked me?

Tammie was not raised up to be a volunteer. She tried to give an explanation to the serving mindset that she came into, and incorporates her faith into the story. She talked about starting to serve and how that affects other aspects of life:

There's just a mindset that comes with that, that it's just part, you incorporate it into everyday living. And it increases hopefully and gets

better and you push out more of the secular part of you and its more absorbed into just everyday where you're not even thinking about it you're not separating that out anymore. It just becomes who you are. And if you don't start serving you don't, you don't get to experience that. You just don't.

She also referred to it as a “trickling effect.” She explained:

When you experience the kind of love and compassion and peace that you have when you serve other people it can't help but carry over and start trickling – and maybe trickling is a better description – start trickling into every aspect of your life. Whether it's at home or it's at work or if it's, you know, at [community organizations] or whatever it is you know it trickles into every aspect of your life. It just does. If you're serving for the right reason it can't help but have that affect on your life. I truly believe that and I've certainly experienced that.

This trickle effect was also described by Daniel. He talked about the idea of serving others no matter where he is and how once he started serving he seemed to start serving other places. He said:

I don't know if it's a personality thing that I bring to my church and volunteer position or if it's something that my volunteer position has kind of built into me. So I don't know if its chicken or egg that's first but um service... I think I tend to do that in my everyday life whether it be a neighbor needs something or, I'm always willing to help and I'm not sure

which direction that happened but that's the way things are now and have been since I started volunteering at church, that's for sure.

Regarding the impact of volunteering, Kate said, simply, "I've taken what I've learned in that and I've applied it to other areas of my life personally."

Daniel talked about how volunteering is not just something we choose to do but is something we are called to, especially in a church setting. He articulated:

Volunteer is a word that I just don't like, especially in the church environment, because the connotation to me of the word volunteer is that you have a choice. And I just feel like what I do is more of a calling than a choice. I mean obviously I could choose to say no, but there's more to it than just hey do you want to go to Burger King or McDonald's – make a choice. It's, you're getting this tug, are you going to follow it or completely ignore it? And it's just easier to follow it to me.

Primary Theme Four: Passion

Passion, love, desire, enjoyment, and belief are all aspects of the theme passion. Seven of the eight participants spoke of thoroughly enjoying, being passionate about, and loving their volunteering. Similarly, with this deep zeal for their volunteering, many also had a sincere belief in what they were doing.

Penelope talked extensively about her love for music, singing, and being in the praise band. In fact, she said she "loved it" at least seven times. The following are a few of her quotes, "You know, I love it because it's just something that just, I like to do." "That is just my passion and I think that's what makes it so fun." "For me, I just, I love it. I just, I love to do it!" "What really makes me happy is volunteering." Penelope was

not the only participant to find deep enjoyment from volunteering. Tammie stated, “I love what I do. I have a lot of fun with what I do. And when I’m not there I miss it.”

This theme also comes through as a desire, or a deep want from within. Kyle referred to a desire when talking about his interests in this quote, “I had a desire to work with college students in terms of college ministry for a number of years going back to when I was in college as an undergraduate student.” Tammie tried to explain this, and called it a desire or “want within.” She described, “There’s always a need, a desire, a want within to serve and it’s just a matter of God showing you where He would like for you to serve.”

Kyle reflects his passion through how people have responded to his work. He talked about his heart, and how others see that in him too. He shared, “A lot of the folks in our church have been like, that’s your heart, that’s, that’s you!” Charles is eager to do more. He talked about a greater need for his responsibility coming in the future. He declared, “I’m looking forward to that. Not that it’s a burden or anything, it’s something that I’m eager to get at and really help.”

This enjoyment and passion for the work was so strong for some that it really drowned out any negatives of the work. When asked what was most frustrating to her, Penelope responded, “Hmmm. What’s frustrating? ... From that aspect, I don’t, I don’t really get frustrated with it because I think it is such a passion.” Charles responded similarly, “I don’t know that there’s any time when it’s been a big hardship that it, uh, I do enjoy it so much to help out.” Charles also mentioned multiple times how he enjoys that he now has more time to serve others. He explained, “I enjoy my retirement because of the fact that... I have more time to donate to the church and to whoever needs help.”

Daniel enjoys it so much that his responsibilities “don’t even seem like work to me.”

Paisleigh looks forward to her volunteer time:

It’s part of the week that I, I mean it’s just something I look forward to. I would say in a lot of ways it’s sort of like a hobby to me. It’s something I really enjoy doing. I like getting involved and just being a part of what’s going on.

Some participants talked about a deep belief in their work. Kate stated, “You know, my belief of course is that everybody can benefit from [our program]... so the more people we can get in the better.” Penelope shares in this sentiment, as she described, “I wouldn’t volunteer to do something if I really truly didn’t believe in it or didn’t want to do it.”

Secondary Themes

Secondary themes were themes that were still critical themes found by most participants, but were not as evident and had fewer codes. Further, primary themes were strong, clear aspects across the data; however, secondary themes were more aspects that were present, but were in the background more so than the foreground.

Secondary Theme One: Autonomy

The freedom to be a volunteer and be independent was another common theme of these participants. Seven of the eight volunteers mentioned either lack of guilt, independence, or freedom to operate within general guidelines. This theme came through as not only independence on when and how much to work, but also came through as a freedom of how to do the job. While most of the participants mentioned this theme, it seemed to be a primary factor for only a few. Others mentioned it as part of the aspects

of their job, but it was more of a backdrop of the position than a strong, emergent aspect of their volunteerism.

A lack of guilt was strongly appreciated by a few of the participants. Hayley, specifically, felt complete freedom from guilt in volunteering. When asked what she liked best, she responded:

Its my control in the aspect of if I choose to go in I choose to go in.

There's nothing, I mean they've asked for me to come in on a regular basis and to do it. I just, I have worked since I was 14 at a structured role and um there's guilt associated with that, and it's been nice not having the guilt associated with the job because you're always trying to manage being the good worker, being the good mother, being the good wife, being the good housekeeper accountant at home, and that was always one thing I struggled with. And so now it's just I do it when I can. And if I can't, I can't. And that's one thing at [my church] they don't, they don't make you feel guilty when you can't. I guess there's not guilt with that piece of it.

She went on to explain how she feels free of guilt:

I just don't. Like I said, they don't they say, 'Hey are you going to be around this afternoon, are you going to be around this morning?' They don't make it like, you know... I know what they're saying with that, I heard so and so is sick, so I mean they don't say 'hey so and so is sick and we're having a hard time filling it' they just say 'hey are you going to be

around this, you know, from 10-12' and I'm like 'you know I already have an appointment' and they're like 'oh ok, we're just curious.'

Tammie brings a unique perspective to the idea of guilt. Throughout her interview, she distinguished between volunteering and serving. One of several ways the two were distinguished was by guilt. She explained:

When I think of volunteering, it's something that I do largely because there's nobody else to do it. It doesn't necessarily feel like it's something that, um, it's not necessarily something that I feel I'm good at. That I really feel led to do. I do it sometimes out of guilt. People are guilted into volunteering. And when you serve you're serving for hopefully for all the right reasons.

Penelope also enjoys the freedom of being a volunteer. She stated:

You also feel like you're almost your own boss so you can't screw up. You know what I mean? They're not going to go 'hey you did that wrong' because you are volunteers. It's not like you are going to get reviewed over it, you know, when you can just do what you want to do and help out when, how you can.

When asked to describe his volunteer experience, Charles responded, "I don't have definite hours, I don't have a definite job. It's kind of open-ended volunteerism." Yet, he still feels essential and needed, as described in the *make a difference* theme. He seems to have found a balance between doing essential jobs, but at his own pace.

For others, *autonomy* was described more in reference to their responsibilities. Kate stated, "There was very little interference or suggestions, we pretty much ran the

meetings as we saw fit.” Daniel talked about being bought into a vision but having freedom within the philosophy of the church, as he stated, “I think [my church] does a very good job of that – casting the vision getting everybody to buy into the vision and have everybody heading in the same direction.” Another time he said,

I’m given a fairly long leash because I know what the goals are for the clubs, I know what the philosophy of the church is, I know what all of the other leaders that I work with are capable of, and I’m given the power to make quite a few decisions whether it be budgetary or manpower... decisions that affect how [my program] is operated.

Kyle talks with the confidence to take the direction he feels best, but also appreciates being on board with the larger picture. He described:

It’s enabled me to help say this is where we’re going and this is how it fits into the larger picture of the church and the church’s initiatives and desires and their vision, so that the people see the two go hand in hand instead of the church over here and the this ministry just flapping around on the side that gets some money from it once in a while. That it’s coherent. And it’s unified.

Secondary Theme Two: Awareness

One of the most intriguing findings was the secondary theme of *awareness*. Five of the eight participants talked about actively seeing needs around them. This is the essence of the *awareness* theme. Participants were aware of their surroundings and the needs right around them. It is as if it is a precursor to action, whether initial action and involvement or becoming involved in a larger capacity. Even the three participants that

did not explicitly state that they “saw a need” or something similar as an action step, these three still described instances where they saw something and took action to complete it.

Charles mentioned this when talking about why he feels he was identified as someone exhibiting empowerment behaviors. “I guess the reason they have empowered me to do the tasks is that I’m a visionary person. That I can see things that need to be done, where other people can walk right by it and not see that.” At the very beginning of Daniel’s interview, he stated his awareness to needs. He talked about a time he was dropping his kids off at church:

We were dropping them off at Sunday school and obviously involved with the children’s ministry side of things, and recognized a need, I think, for people to help in the children’s ministry side of things.

Paisleigh talked about realizing the value of doing more, and provided it as a reason to be more involved when she stated “I think a step further is I started just to see the value in giving back and being a part of something bigger.” Tammie felt that being empowered helped her see more needs. When asked how empowerment played out in her volunteer role, she responded, “Well it gives me the knowledge, it gives me the ability to serve other people, to be able to see the need and to act upon it.” Kyle talked about seeing needs as a step towards action to make in development of others:

I think that formula is for me but also other people that formally see a need and that wow I don’t just have to sit here. And I wish I could do something. You actually can and you can have a positive impact.

For some, this step was obvious but not mentioned. Hayley talked about a time when she felt empowered, “No one was really keeping a tally of who had late work, so I took it upon myself just to go to the grade book and start basically taking a kid’s name and start writing all their late work down.” Implicit in her statement is that she saw a need for keeping a tally, though no one else did. Similarly, Penelope was involved and saw a way she could help ease the burden for a staff person. She described all that it takes to coordinate the music team:

It really takes time to know what is happening in that service that day, if there’s something special going on, if you need a particular song that, hey, this will pull this... they know this song and they will really do well with it and put them on there. And who can sing well with this vocalist? So it’s not as simple as just hey let’s just throw this schedule together and go. And then also looking at what they’re availability is and doing that and so it was taking a lot of time for her and she had to do other things. And I said, ‘You know what, just let me do it.’ It was something that, it was never a position or a volunteer position. She thought I was crazy, I think, at first and she’s like, ‘really you think you’d want to do this?’

Kate was reading a book about having purpose in life when she started to become aware of a way to serve. She described:

I kept reading about how our biggest hurts can become our biggest ministries in helping other people. And I sat there for a little bit and I thought do you suppose that that could be why we, or part of the reason why, we had to go through this? That God wants to use that to help other

people? And after I thought about it for a while I said something to my husband about it.

Secondary Theme Three: Ability

Six of eight participants talked about having an *ability* to do their volunteer tasks. Overall, similar to the *awareness* theme, participants talked about it to a lesser extent than the primary themes so it was classified as secondary. The *ability* theme entails the mentality or feeling that the participants were capable of doing the tasks.

Charles talked most about his ability to do the tasks at hand. He tied his whole full-time career into preparation to be where he is today. He stated:

I was a communications person and worked in the telephone industry and data communications and I was wondering why I was in the area that I was in, because there were many things that I volunteer for now at my church as a direct result of my job that I had. And these things that I learned at my job that I now apply at the church such as installing and moving phones and moving computers and because every time the school year starts the teachers move around and they need the phones moved and computers moved and so I get involved in that. And uh so there's a, over the years, as I worked I was in the installation and maintaining telephone offices, I'd install equipment and by installing the equipment I picked up some electrical experience. So there are things that they don't understand at the church – well I can assist in certain things in the electrical department and just plain maintenance, repairing things of uh any nature

as far as furniture or electrical pencil sharpeners or visual equipment, audio equipment, things of that nature.

Later he continued this thought:

I look back on my life and I can see now why I was doing the things I've done over the years. The things that I've learned that I now can apply, that seems that God was preparing me for this act of volunteerism.

Most participants simply mentioned their ability to do their volunteer roles. Kyle referred to past experiences that helped prepare him, "I've been able to have experiences serving in those areas already and not just going, well I'd like to try this. I've been actually able to do them." Daniel uses the term equipped when he considers service opportunities and gauges if he feels able to do them. He stated, "It all goes back to service. There's a need and it's something that I am equipped to do and so I do it." Tammie explained it similarly, "There is a real need here. You know, this is something I can really do."

Faith played a role in feeling able as well. Tammie also mentioned, "You're serving because that's an area where you're gifted. And it doesn't mean that you do the best job it just means that's where God wants you and he's given you the ability to do it at some level." Penelope stated, "I feel like God, if God has given me the skills to love to be with people I'm totally a people person, that He's also thrown things my way, you know, to do that."

For Paisleigh, involvement has led to more confidence in herself. Interestingly, she also talked a lot about the encouragement she received as a volunteer. Regarding confidence, she stated:

As a volunteer I feel like just my experiences and the opportunity to just get involved in unique ways – it's given me just the confidence in, I think, myself but also in just the idea that when people come together and they work towards a common goal that good things can happen and that you can accomplish a lot together.

Other relevant findings

Several things emerged in the background of these interviews. While this information was not clear or strong enough to be grouped into primary themes or even secondary themes, it is still relevant data to be considered for future research.

Constraints

Time and balance

The first relevant aspect to be discussed is participant time and schedule. It may be no surprise that six of eight participants mentioned time or schedule as a limiting factor for their volunteerism. Interestingly, though, something else surfaces when looking closer at the data – the notion of balance. Charles is retired and did not mention time as a limiter. However, he still has to balance volunteering into his life. When describing the process he uses to decide whether or not he is able to respond to emergencies, he stated:

Well, that is always a problem I think. Whether it's volunteering or with your job you have to look at your family situation, where you're at, what you're doing. I don't want to get my volunteerism in trouble with my home life.

For Kyle, volunteering requires him to find balance between everything pulling different directions. He stated, “It makes me have to balance my time more, especially with a young family plus graduate work. So I have to, I’m forced to really plan ahead, think ahead.” Daniel indicated a similar need to find balance when referring to time as a limiter. He talked about dedicating time to multiple things in his response, “Mostly it’d be time of course. I have to dedicate my time to supporting my family and I do a couple different things at church, you know, as a volunteer.”

Frustration with Lack of Others’ Involvement

The participants, interviews, and data were overwhelmingly positive. However, one negative idea was moderately recurring in the data. The frustration or desire for more people to be involved came up several times. Overall, participants did not have a negative perspective, but more of a desire for others to share in what they had. The quote from Daniel discussed in the Rewarding theme is very telling of this challenge:

I guess I’m surprised that more people don’t volunteer. As rewarding as it is to me, you know, the tradeoff of the time that I invest versus the reward that I get is to me a no brainer. It’s just why, why isn’t everybody doing this?

Kate discussed the need for more people to be involved when she explained that the most frustrating thing to her was “that more people didn’t choose to come alongside for the long-term and help out to make the ministry grow.” Tammie sees a huge need for more volunteers, but not enough people stepping up:

That is probably one of the most frustrating things in serving is that you see such a tremendous need and it just seems like there’s so so many

people and there's so few volunteers sometimes. So that's probably been the most frustrating thing is that there's just always such a need and there's so many places that people need to serve and they're not."

Kyle described his frustrations with those who he called spiritually lazy:

The most frustrating... people who are spiritually lazy. And I don't profess to be, you know, super energetic at times or anything, my nature is to be a pessimist. But you know whether it be some of the [members] we've had that have, 'I don't wanna do it, I just wanna come and sit. I think that's all I should do. And you just do for us.' Or you know [members] that we're like 'hey we missed you [last] night.' 'Yeah I was gonna come but I was really tired.' 'Dude I worked all day. I'm tired I wanna be with my family but I care enough for you guys that I'm here. Um and I'm here for you.'

Paisleigh also talked about this frustration, but also her desire for more people to share what she enjoys:

I don't know if this is [this program's] thing or if it's a church wide thing but it seems like it's always the same in our church, we always say it's the same 10 percent that serve you know. It's a small number of people but it's the same people who will be there no matter you know... you see the same people that volunteer for the events you know whether they're in our, you know in [this program] or not, it's usually the same core people who show up so that's frustrating to me that more people don't get involved. And most of the time I see that as they're really missing out, not

so much frustration with you know why aren't you helping that kind of thing but more um frustration that they don't see the value in serving, in volunteering.

Other Challenges

Primarily the only other negative things that were mentioned regarded either personalities or church relations. Daniel mentioned his personality:

The ... negative side of things as I see them is more a personality thing from my perspective. Um if you can't count if somebody commits to something and then doesn't do it – to me regardless whether it's a volunteer or not causes problems for me. And so the only, that's about the only negative thing that I can think of um about the volunteer experience and thankfully that hasn't happened much at all it's very positive overall.

Hayley listed “working through personalities” as a frustration. She described her efforts to motivate children:

What I mean by that is getting to know the personalities, getting to know what works with one kid that won't work with another child. Basically the same thing you do with your own children. One method will work with one kid and one method won't work for another kid.

Kyle mentioned the need to represent his ministry among the church in a public relations role:

Part of that has just been, whether it be, you know, major issues or just the simple helping people figure out why this ministry's important and the benefits of it. Just kind of that that PR role that you have to do sometimes.

Propelling Forces

On the positive side, some participants mentioned things that I have labeled propelling forces. Paisleigh talked extensively about the encouragement she received when considering greater responsibility in her program:

I didn't really see myself as somebody who really wanted to do that or thought that I could, you know, take over leading a department or whatever, but [my leader] had just really strong, oh what would you say, like just strong words of affirmation. Like 'I've seen your work with the kids and think you'd be really great at this position and we would love to have you.' And that I think encouraged me into taking that, you know, role a step further.

When asked to explain how she felt empowered, Kate mentioned encouragement from church leadership, "Basically just, you know, just saying you're doing a good thing, we approve and keep on doing it."

The leadership also plays a role for Paisleigh. She communicated great appreciation for her leader's influence:

The impact that people have had on me, specifically staff people but also a person who's in charge of recruiting and volunteer at our at our church – just the importance of continually having contact with them. Because that has also encouraged me along the way when maybe life has gotten busier or, I've never thought about not volunteering but there have been times when I've felt like I have a lot on my plate, maybe I need to cut back. But it seems like, just like notes or just like words of encouragement when I've

seen those people – that has encouraged me to stay involved and stay motivated.

Teamwork is another factor that came up on occasion. Penelope talked about how her team works together, “There’s nobody, there’s not all these, all these heads of everything trying to come together to plan this power play. We just all, we’re all volunteers and we all just work together.” Kyle talked about creating a team among members, “I keep it very open and I make it very clear to those [members] to try and empower them. You guys wanna do things you wanna try you tell me. As long as its not illegal, immoral, or unethical, I’m open.”

Paisleigh and Kate have appreciated being properly equipped for their roles. Kate referred to a conference her church helped pay for:

We actually attended a three day workshop in California at [another church] that taught us how to start up the ministry in a proper way to help set it up for success. So the church actually paid for part of that trip out there for us. For we were not in a position to do that ourselves at the time.

Paisleigh appreciates the ongoing equipping her church provides:

I think our church does a really good job with it but providing that ongoing training and building into the lives of our volunteers. I’m not one, like I don’t need, I don’t need a gift certificate or a dinner – that kind of thing but just the times when the church has taken time to like put together a conference or something and a luncheon where we all can come and learn and kind of get recharged... that was very encouraging to me. And it’s kind of one of those times where it, I don’t know, helps keep me

motivated, helps me want to keep getting involved and want to keep looking for more opportunities to volunteer.

Getting Started

Participants had different reasons for becoming involved in volunteering. For some, tragic, life-changing events provided opportunity to become involved. This is reflected in the aforementioned quote from Kate in the *awareness* theme. Reflecting on a time after a tragic event with her child, she pondered, “Do you suppose that that could be why we, or part of the reason why, we had to go through this? That God wants to use that to help other people?” For another, a summer mission trip was the life-changing event:

I was coming back from a summer mission, mission trip. I really began searching for, okay now what. And what was this – just a one-time shot, or God, is God wanting to do something more? And God really began to use that to formulate a desire to minister.

Penelope never had a life-changing event, but talked about how worshipping God just became what others see as a volunteer activity. “It’s just something that I don’t even consider volunteering because I consider it the way I worship if that makes any sense.”

For a couple, it was their spouse. Daniel gave credit to his wife. “It was probably more my wife’s idea that we get involved than mine initially. And most of the conversation was are you interested in, or completely opposed to, being involved, and I was all for that.” Paisleigh also mentioned her spouse’s influence:

Actually my husband became involved before I ever did. Um and it was a little bit, I would say, of his influence guiding me to find ways to get

involved. And that sent me on a journey of getting involved in just small things initially.

In Summary

The four primary themes uncovered in the data constitute a combination of critical factors for volunteers. Interestingly, these four themes are arguably heavily intertwined. This combination of themes is the essence of the findings of this study. While other themes are important, it seems that the core of these participants includes *making a difference*, a *lifestyle of service*, *passion*, and doing something *rewarding*. Table 4.1 provides a list of the themes and other relevant findings.

Table 4.1. Themes		
Primary Themes	Secondary Themes	Other Relevant Findings
<i>Make a Difference</i>	<i>Autonomy</i>	<i>Constraints</i>
<i>Rewarding</i>	<i>Awareness</i>	<i>Propelling Forces</i>
<i>Lifestyle of Service</i>	<i>Ability</i>	<i>Getting Started</i>
<i>Passion</i>		

Table 4.1. Themes

It could be argued that one theme drives another, or that one moderates or is a condition for another. Perhaps one's passion drives their lifestyle of service, and provides opportunity to make a difference and do something rewarding. Or, maybe a rewarding experience catapults someone into a lifestyle of service where passion to make a difference is born. Potentially a learned lifestyle of service provides rewarding experiences that then provides the opportunity to develop a passion to make a difference.

However, the results of this study give no conclusive bearing on such direction. What was found is that all four primary themes exist, and these themes all drive these participants to volunteer more and be more involved.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

Summary of Research Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore and understand the experience of empowerment among volunteers. This purpose was considered through the central research question, “What is the lived experience of empowered volunteers in a Christian church?” with research subquestions addressing how they understand their volunteering, their current experience of being a volunteer, and how volunteering impacts other aspects of their lives. The purpose and research questions were accomplished through eight qualitative interviews with church volunteers who were identified by a church leader as empowered. Four primary themes, *make a difference*, *rewarding*, *lifestyle of service*, and *passion*, and three secondary themes, *autonomy*, *awareness*, and *ability*, emerged from the qualitative data.

Participants had a strong desire to have a purpose in their lives through *making a difference* in, and having an impact on, other people’s lives. An especially interesting aspect of this concept was their desire to help others either through something they had been through or help others enjoy something they enjoyed. The empowered participants also found their volunteerism deeply satisfying and *rewarding*. In fact, they enjoyed it so much so that they felt they were the primary benefactors of their volunteerism, not those they were serving. Understanding these critical pieces of the participants’ volunteer experience, it is not surprising that these volunteers had developed a *lifestyle of service* and volunteering. Most participants could not imagine life without volunteering, even if they had not volunteered for all of their lives. It is difficult to describe the amount of

passion the participants felt for the work they did. This came through as either a deep love or a want from within that gave participants a heart to do the work. It was so strong it even drowned out most, if any, negatives or drawbacks to the volunteer role.

To a lesser extent than those mentioned above, the participants also described a few other aspects of their volunteerism. These empowered participants experienced freedom in their volunteer roles. This *autonomy* was expressed through a freedom of when and how much to work as well as how to go about their job. Intriguingly, participants also developed an *awareness* of the needs around them and were able to see things in which they desired to make a difference. Finally, in some way, shape, or form, they felt able to do their job. This *ability* may have come through work experience, encouragement, or equipping, but ultimately volunteers felt competent in doing the tasks of their volunteer position.

Discussion

Empowered volunteers from this study have a desire to *make a difference*. This sense of purpose and desire to help others is congruent with Mowen and Sujan's (2005) volunteer behavior study that found that a motive to help others was positively related to volunteering. Further, this theme is similar to Garland, Myers, and Wolfer's (2009) theme of *Response to Human Need*. Garland et al. describe how volunteers "feel obligated to respond to the needs of their neighbors and communities" (p. 29). This concept is similar to the *Values* function of the Volunteer Functions Inventory of Clary et al. (1998). Those with the *Values* function express values of altruistic and humanitarian concern for others (Clary et al., 1998). This is an important function of volunteers, as Fletcher and Major (2004) found *Values* to be the highest function among a sample of

medical student volunteers. Finkelstein (2008) found that the more their *Values* motives were fulfilled, the more time volunteers gave. Based on the findings from this study of the *make a difference* theme, the sample of participants from this present study seemed to possess a high *Values* function with their desire to impact others and help those around them, and affirm the notion that volunteers with altruistic and humanitarian concern are likely to be more involved and dedicated to their organization. The *Values* function and the notion of *making a difference* bear similarity to the psychological empowerment cognition of *Meaning* as defined by Spreitzer (1995) as deriving value from work tasks, and the researcher asserts that if volunteers have the opportunity to make a difference, they are more likely to be empowered volunteers.

On the other hand, when comparing the findings of this study to literature, a lack of desire to *make a difference* may not lead to less involvement or dedication. Hartenian and Lilly (2009) argued that egoism, the opposite of altruism, may be associated with attitudes that lead to longer-term relationships with an agency. Clary et al.'s (1998) Volunteer Functions Inventory has no function related to altruism but does include the *Enhancement* function. Those with this function volunteer to grow personally, or obtain satisfaction related to self-esteem (Clary et al., 1998). Haski-Leventhal (2009) discussed literature that argues that pure altruism does not exist, but that instead altruistic acts are basically egotistic in that helping others is merely a means to increase one's own satisfaction (Smith, 2000, as cited in Haski-Leventhal, 2009). However, Haski-Leventhal (2009), in her review of altruism and volunteerism, went on to challenge, "It is time to more broadly acknowledge the possibility of a moral and alter-centered humanity, and to see that not all altruism demonstratively serves the helper" (p. 293). Yet another factor

that could play into altruism and volunteerism is identity. Volunteerism has also been connected to altruism through cultural identity, as Wilson and Musick (1998) identified cultural capital predicted volunteering along with human and social capital. An identity through a strong sense of community may also play a role, as it did with Haski-Leventhal, Ben-Arieh, and Melton's (2008) study of rural American volunteers (as cited in Haski-Leventhal, 2009). Participants in the present study showed both a strong desire to *make a difference* and a strong *rewarding* feeling, or feeling of satisfaction. While it appeared that participants were volunteering for purely altruistic reasons, results of this study are inconclusive whether these participants volunteer because of a self-fulfilling desire to give themselves satisfaction, because of a strong sense of community, or based on altruism alone.

Indeed, whether or not the motivations of volunteers are self-seeking, the concept of satisfaction derived from volunteering is apparent in this study, and is congruent with current literature. Deep satisfaction, meaning, and rewards were results of Gooch's (2005) study of environmental volunteers, Warburton and McLaughlin's (2006) study of aging women, and Yanay and Yanay's (2008) study on volunteer dropouts. In fact, Yanay and Yanay found that volunteers were dropping out to preserve positive self-feeling, in other words, if volunteers were "feeling bad" about their volunteer experience they would leave rather than continue to feel negatively. It is therefore reasonable to assert that committed, long-term volunteers, as those interviewed in this study, are still volunteering because their positive self-feelings have been preserved, and that positive self-feeling, or rewards, is a factor to longer-term commitment. Further, the results of this study match Kulik's (2007) study of volunteers, finding that participants with high

levels of empowerment expressed high levels of satisfaction and that those with high levels of self-esteem also expressed high levels of satisfaction. Millette and Gagne (2008) conducted a volunteer study and found a relationship between job satisfaction and job characteristics. While this may be the case for some volunteers, and was the case for some of the volunteers in this study, it appears that satisfaction is gleaned from more than just job characteristics. Finally, satisfaction of the volunteers in this study also aligns with studies of empowerment in the business sector, as Seibert, Silver, and Randolph (2004) found that psychological empowerment was positively related to job satisfaction.

Based on the results of this study, the researcher asserts that with empowered volunteers in a Christian church setting, the volunteers have been impacted by their service and have changed themselves to be able to incorporate service into their lives in a larger capacity. Similarly, after conducting a study on volunteers in parks and recreation, Barnes and Sharpe (2009) made the recommendation that opportunities to volunteer be developed around lifestyles. The authors state that developing experiences that are integrated and compatible with people's lifestyle is a "key strategy for recruitment and retention" (p. 183). Yet, the present study results align with results from the Garland, Myers, and Wolfer (2008) study that indicated changes in faith, attitudes, values, and behaviors as a result of volunteering. Participants in this study talked about the growing role volunteerism had in their lives. Indeed, the concept of aligning volunteers and lifestyles is noticeable. But, which comes first – do volunteers begin volunteering and change themselves and incorporate service into their lives, or do volunteers have lives that they only fit into volunteering? The participants from this study integrated service into a regular part of life.

The empowered volunteers in this study described *autonomy* to be an important aspect of their volunteerism. Participants talked about the freedom they felt to do what they thought necessary within the boundaries of the organization's policies and vision. Literature supports these findings. Boezeman and Ellemers (2009) found that autonomy needs are positively related to the intent to remain a volunteer. Schroer and Hertel (2009) discovered that Wikipedia volunteers' perceived autonomy enhanced their engagement and satisfaction. Gagne (2003) found that autonomy orientation, or how much one's own behavior is self-directed, was strongly related to prosocial behavior, which was measured by volunteer hours. In the aforementioned Millette and Gagne (2008) study, autonomous motivation mediated the relationship between job characteristics and satisfaction. From Nichols and Ojala's (2009) study of sports volunteers, one important expectation of volunteers was their flexibility of engagement, hence greater autonomy. One of the four cognitions of psychological empowerment is *Self-determination* (Spreitzer, 1995), which bears great similarity in definition to autonomy, described as "an individual's sense of having a choice in initiating and regulating actions" (pg. 1443) and can be traced to Deci, Connell, and Ryan's (1989) and Deci and Ryan's (1987) work on autonomy and self-determination, as well as Thomas and Velthouse's (1990) construct. However, on the other hand, this does not mean to give volunteers no direction. Participants from this study appreciated the vision and guidelines they received from their organization. Yanay and Yanay (2008) discovered that an organizational policy of nonintervention was frustrating to volunteers. It may be that the volunteers are looking for flexible work arrangements, but still need appropriate direction and guidance as necessary. Hence, the

researcher asserts that autonomy in balance with proper guidance leads to greater empowerment and satisfaction.

Participants in this study described an *ability* to do to do their volunteer role through skills or through being equipped. These volunteers had self-confidence. Interestingly, Ferrari, Luhrs, and Lyman (2007) found that stress was predicted by low self-esteem among volunteer caregivers to the elderly. Similar to the psychological empowerment construct that participants were identified by, the cognition of *Competence* is one's belief in his or her own skill (Spreitzer, 1995). The results of the present study support evidence that confidence in one's abilities leads to psychological empowerment.

Interestingly, the participants in this study did not fully or completely reflect the psychological empowerment definition on which Spreitzer (1995) based her workplace scale. The two primary themes of *make a difference* and *rewarding* most resemble the *Meaning* cognition of value of one's work. The secondary theme of *ability* found in this study largely reflects the *Competence* cognition of self-efficacy. The secondary theme of *autonomy* closely resembles Spreitzer's *Self-determination* cognition which involves an individual's sense of choice for one's actions. Little mention was given, and no themes or relevant findings reflect the *Impact* cognition which involves influencing organizational outcomes. Therefore, of the four cognitions, *Meaning*, *Competence*, *Self-determination*, and *Impact*, *Meaning* was largely overemphasized with two primary themes, *Competence* and *Self-determination* were moderately recognized with a secondary theme per cognition, and *Impact* was underemphasized. While multiple factors could be in play with the absence of the *Impact* cognition, the strong emphasis of *Meaning* is the most impactful finding in this research.

Integration of Themes

With the findings of this study, supported by literature, a visual diagram display is proposed. Participants from this study, however they started volunteering, had an energy or momentum generated from their volunteer experience and empowerment. Some participants' wheel started from life-changing incidents, while others were put in motion by parents or by their faith. This momentum can be described as a rotating wheel. While the wheel may have started very small from a volunteer experience or by becoming aware of volunteer opportunities and needs, something started the wheel spinning. Once spinning, different drivers, or themes, come into play to make the wheel spin faster. Whether it was *rewarding* experiences or greater *awareness*, participants became more involved. Further, the more drivers that are in place, the faster the wheel goes. Similar to a variable-speed pulley, as the wheel spins faster it gets larger and shows greater empowerment. Several participants described the process of starting in a small role, and then getting more and more involved. For some participants, it may be that some drivers are more prominent than others, and some drivers may be non-existent. Nonetheless, as the individual continues volunteering, the wheel, with the drivers in place, continues to spin faster, grow, and have a greater impact. The following illustration (Figure 5.1) shows this visually.

Figure 5.1. The Empowerment Wheel

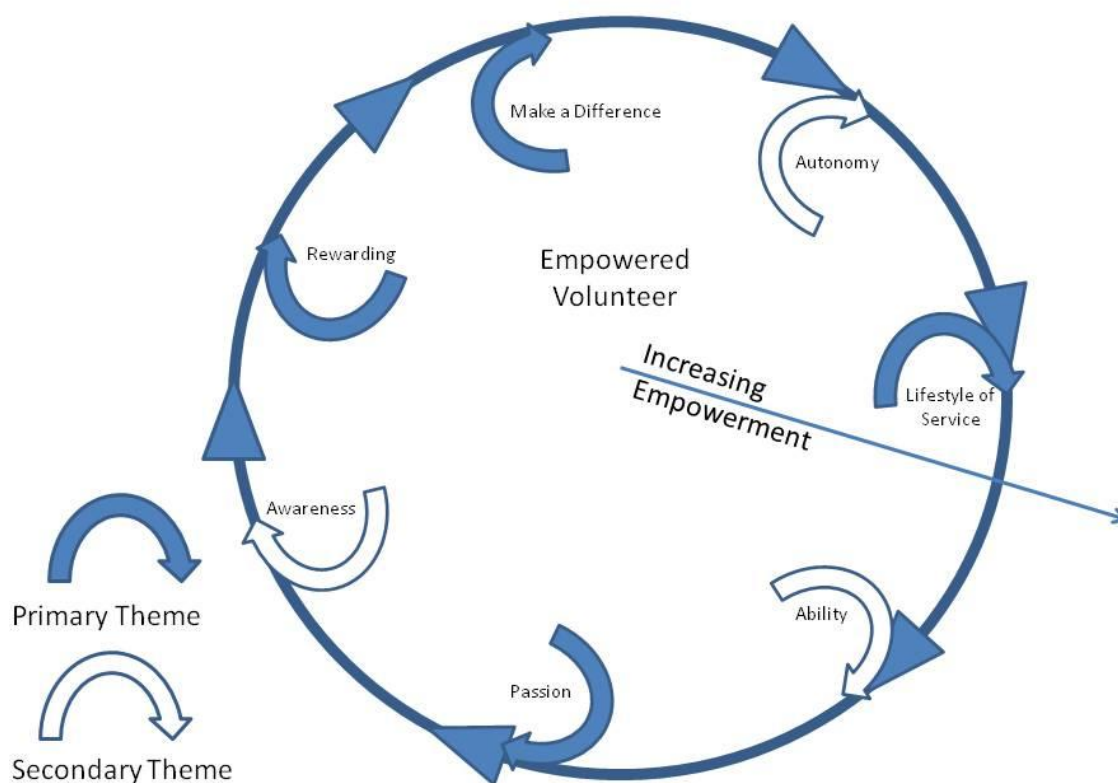


Figure 5.1. The Empowerment Wheel.

Implications for Research

This research study provides several implications for current academic literature. First, the findings provide a compass for direction on bridging the empowerment and volunteerism literature in that these findings provide clues of how empowerment in volunteers is different than empowerment in the workplace context. Further, a psychological empowerment scale for volunteers could be well-guided by utilizing the findings of this study in consideration of a concept map. After all, from the definition used in this study, volunteers are motivated by personal responsibility and not personal profit, and are responding to needs beyond basic social obligation (Garland, Myers, &

Wolfer, 2009). The findings give insight to how empowerment may be uniquely different in volunteers than in the workplace and this is critical in the development of a scale. Specifically, results of this study showed that volunteers gave a greater focus on the *Meaning* cognition of Spreitzer (1995) and scale and less focus on *Impact*. The results resembling *Meaning* were strongly emphasized and may be critical in understanding volunteer empowerment.

Further, it may provide further clues into an already researched workplace psychological empowerment literature. If these findings demonstrate how people feel empowered when they have no obligation to a paycheck or to the organization, then it could possibly guide, in turn, how they would ideally be empowered in a workplace context. Research could work backwards, so to speak, to see if indeed putting aspects that led to volunteer empowerment into the workplace resulted in greater empowerment achieved.

Implications for Practitioners

The implications of the findings of this study for those working with, managing, directing, or leading volunteers revolve around the Empowerment Wheel. As can be seen from the Empowerment Wheel, it may be helpful for a volunteer coordinator to put effort into providing the drivers necessary to make volunteers feel empowered. For example, it may be helpful for a volunteer coordinator to help volunteers find their passion. Helping volunteers see the value, and in turn feel satisfied, may also have large return. Providing volunteers the opportunity to be autonomous in their work role should help them feel a freedom from guilt and therefore remove a potential obstacle from the volunteer.

This study indicated that participants have an *awareness* of the needs around them. While little literature could be found connecting volunteers and awareness, an article by Bono, Shen, and Snyder (2010) suggested both knowledge and awareness of the community, as well as actual community engagement, could be increased through community leadership programs. It is the author's belief that, similar to communities, organizations or agencies could increase awareness within their organizations through leadership programs or through a focus of development of the members or volunteers.

Future Research

Since phenomenological research is exploratory, such a study as this can give direction to future research. Given that empowerment has been studied relatively little in volunteers, many opportunities exist for future studies.

- The significance volunteers placed upon the satisfaction they receive draws out the first recommendation. Looking at literature that discusses the notion that all volunteerism is a type of egoism in that good deeds are merely means to greater personal satisfaction (Smith, 2000, as cited in Haski-Leventhal, 2009), juxtaposed with Haski-Leventhal's (2009) argument of the possibility of true altruism, warrants further research on understanding this balance.
- Several aspects to consider for future research come from the auxiliary findings from the data – those that were not primary or secondary themes. This is an especially unique area to consider for further study because while these may not have been primary findings or even a focus of the research, their presence indicates opportunity for further study. The first recommendation involves the balance of time. Similar to some participants in this study, Gooch's (2005) results

suggest that satisfied volunteers are those that manage to balance volunteering with other aspects of their lives. Along similar lines, Yanay and Yanay's (2008) study discussed the importance of volunteer self-image. Research to understand how volunteers handle their desires to volunteer in comparison to other priorities in life, and how that plays into volunteer identity, could provide understanding of how to better develop and encourage volunteers in their volunteer roles and enhance retention. Further knowledge in this area would be especially helpful for those managing volunteers. It may be that a volunteer coordinator would be able to get valuable return from investing in helping volunteers manage time and priorities.

- While this study provided clues to how volunteers become empowered, further qualitative research should be conducted to confirm and expand on this research. A complete study could be focused on how volunteers transition from little volunteering to becoming those who are wholeheartedly behind their volunteer work. It is also recommended, for greater accuracy, to utilize a mixed-methods approach by utilizing an empowerment scale, such as Spreitzer's (1995), to identify appropriate participants. While it may not be perfectly accurate to volunteers, it would be more accurate at identifying psychological empowerment than an outside perspective (leader's) that this study utilized.
- From the results of this study, it may appear that the concept map for psychological empowerment should be adjusted to match the greater influence of *meaning* and the lesser, if any, influence of *impact* of Spreitzer's (1995) psychological empowerment research in the workplace context. With this

adjustment in the concept map should come adjustments of an empowerment scale to accurately reflect the updated concept map for volunteer empowerment. Further, an empowerment scale utilizing volunteer-specific language would be less confusing and more accurate for future research.

- There are many factors that can influence empowerment. As mentioned in the literature review, empowerment has been studied in the workplace context through leader behaviors, empowerment in teams, and empowerment climate. From the present study, one can guide the direction of future study of similar elements. A couple of participants specifically mentioned how leader behaviors such as encouragement positively affected them through an overall more positive experience, and this is congruent with Rowold's (2008) study of pastors and transformational leadership, where transformational leadership behavior from the pastor was positively associated with followers' job satisfaction. Studying whether volunteers feel empowered by transformational leadership would provide leaders a framework of leadership to assist in developing empowered volunteers.
- Further, in this study it seems that pastors were able to effectively identify empowered volunteers. Similarly, Liao-Troth and Dunn (1999) concluded that volunteer managers have a relatively accurate perception of volunteer motivation. Further study should be conducted to get a sense of how accurately leaders can identify empowered volunteers. Understanding where volunteers are in terms of empowerment, and how well leaders can assess one's empowerment, would help leaders connect to volunteers and develop them into empowered volunteers.

- A few participants of the present study mentioned the teamwork involved with their volunteer roles. Chen et al. (2007) found that team empowerment moderated a positive relationship between individual empowerment and performance. In Ferrari, Luhrs, and Lyman (2007) study of eldercare volunteers, the best predictor for volunteer caregivers was reciprocal responsibility – meaning volunteers felt they could count on each other. Research similar to the Chen, et al. study, but also studying the effects of autonomy, should be conducted to see if indeed team empowerment affects volunteers in the same way, or if the autonomous attitude of volunteerism takes away from this effect.
- Little or no mention was given by participants regarding organizational climate and its effects on their volunteerism. This could be because there is little or no effect, but it also could be because it was taken for granted. With volunteers in this study representing only three churches, it is hard to make any reasonable conclusions or even recommendations regarding leadership climate. Seibert, Silver, and Randolph (2004) found that psychological empowerment mediated empowerment climate and job satisfaction in the workplace. One can logically reason that a negative environment would affect one's felt empowerment, even as a volunteer. Therefore, the researcher recommends studying volunteer empowerment at the organizational climate level within the volunteer organization.
- Interestingly, many of the participants had been volunteering for a long period of time, most ten or more years, and often starting as soon as or shortly after joining the church. However, especially those in a leadership capacity had only been in

the role for a few years. Hustinx and Handy (2009) recommended that organizations recruit volunteers in the short-run through specific programs and activities using volunteers, but that longer-term volunteers have a greater appreciation for organizational mission and principles. In general, results of the present study support these findings. Further, Harrison (1995) conducted a study on intention to volunteer and found that episodic volunteer work can be traced to the relative strength of intentions. While it could be that long-term volunteers were easily chosen and well-known by leaders, further research should be conducted to understand if empowerment strengthens over time spent at an organization.

- One of the limitations to the design of this study was that participants were selected by a church leader. One of the primary premises of the psychological empowerment construct entails that a person is only empowered if he or she psychologically experiences empowerment, not just if someone else thinks so, or does something that might make someone feel empowered. Hence, we asked the leaders to identify volunteers that exhibited specific behaviors, which were behaviors based from Spreitzer's (1995) psychological empowerment scale definition. While the purpose of this study was not to prove that a leader could accurately identify empowered volunteers, it is worth noting that facets of the empowerment construct indeed surfaced from the participants' experiences. In fact, the results of this study are quite relevant in guiding future research on the psychological empowerment of volunteers. Spreitzer defined empowerment as intrinsic task motivation manifested in four cognitions: *Meaning, Competence,*

Self-determination, and *Impact*. Interestingly, the participants in this study gave *Meaning* the greatest mention, as two of the primary themes of *make a difference* and *rewarding* both contain elements of *Meaning* in them. Next were *Self-determination* and *Competence*, as the secondary themes of *autonomy* and *ability* reflected these cognitions, respectively. However, *Impact*, as is defined in psychological empowerment as having a voice in the organization's strategic, administrative, and operating outcomes (Spreitzer, 1995), was not something heard from many participants. Participants did feel they had a say in how they went about their work, but that, by definition, is *Self-determination*. Further research should be conducted to see if the empowerment construct is balanced for volunteerism as it is in the workplace context, and then following, if a scale to measure the construct would also be equally balanced.

- Further, this group of empowered volunteers were *passionate* about their volunteerism. Interestingly, little research could be found regarding volunteers and passion. Is passion another facet of empowerment? Or is it a mediator? Or is it also a part of the *Meaning* cognition of Spreitzer's (1995) empowerment definition? Further research should be conducted to understand the role of passion in volunteer empowerment.
- Finally, volunteers give of their time and efforts to many different organizations for many different reasons. This particular study interviewed faith-based volunteers. A connection to God, a higher calling, and other faith-related aspects could make the results of this study uniquely different from volunteers not associated with faith-based organizations. Therefore, further research is

recommended with volunteers in different contexts to fully understand empowerment in volunteers of all contexts.

In Summary

The purpose of this study was to understand the experience of empowerment among volunteers. Volunteer empowerment was discovered through four primary themes, *make a difference*, *rewarding*, *lifestyle of service*, and *passion*, and three secondary themes, *autonomy*, *awareness*, and *ability*. Other relevant findings included and revolved around volunteer time and balance, challenges, propelling forces, and getting started. Current literature was reviewed and incorporated into the findings of this study. Themes were integrated into a visual display – the empowerment wheel – which shows the experience and scope of volunteer empowerment found in this study. Implications for literature and practitioners were discussed. Future research directions from this study are vast and were included as part of this study.

CHAPTER VI

Journal Article

Written for the Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly

Note: This sample article follows the format and submission guidelines for the Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly.

THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF EMPOWERED VOLUNTEERS: A STUDY OF CHRISTIAN CHURCH VOLUNTEERS

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University of Nebraska, 2010

Abstract

The psychological empowerment construct has been studied thoroughly in the workplace context, but little research has been conducted on volunteer empowerment. Eight interviews were conducted with Christian church volunteers identified as displaying empowered behaviors based upon Spreitzer's (1995) construct. Four primary themes, *make a difference*, *rewarding*, *lifestyle of service*, and *passion*, as well as three secondary themes, *autonomy*, *awareness*, and *ability*, were found. These results and their implications were discussed in relation to current literature. Future research opportunities and direction are discussed.

Introduction

The motivational concept of empowerment has grown in prominence over the last two decades with both researchers and practitioners (Chen, Kirkman, Kanfer, Allen, & Rosen, 2007). The workplace is becoming a place where traditional command and control hierarchies are becoming less appropriate and employees instead take more initiative (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997). With this change, a body of research on empowerment in the workplace has ensued. Most research on empowerment has been conducted in the workplace environment. Little research could be found studying the Spreitzer (1995) definition of empowerment in volunteers – one exception being Kulik (2007). However, Kulik's study was focused more at the outcomes of volunteering, where empowerment was merely one possible outcome of many.

Volunteerism, as a broad topic, has been extensively researched. Volunteers come from many different sectors. But to get a sense of the size of the industry, the nonprofit sector alone in the United States was, in the late 1990s, over \$100 billion of the nation's economy (Liao-Troth & Dunn, 1999). Volunteers play such a vital role in today's economy that we must consider their needs and motivations. As Liao-Troth & Dunn stated, "Differences in understanding such a primary question as why volunteers are present can reasonably be expected to have an impact on organizational effectiveness" (pg. 345). Garland, Myers, and Wolfer (2008) explained that the call for volunteers is increasing, yet populations "long known for their service" (pg. 255) such as older women, long-term service volunteers, and retirees, are declining in volunteerism. If indeed the workplace is changing from management's command and control to employees initiating and being creative and still little is known regarding how this shift

affects volunteerism, then empirical data is needed to understand the phenomenon of empowerment in the volunteer setting. The possibility of providing greater empowerment for volunteers is important in understanding what organizations can do to be more effective volunteer managers through enhancing retention, helping to meet the increasing call for volunteers in our society.

There is great hope and potential in the concept of empowerment. In one of the early works on psychological empowerment, Conger and Kanungo (1988) reported that “studies on leadership and management skills suggest that the practice of empowering subordinates is a principal component of managerial and organizational effectiveness” (pg 471). By the mid-1990’s, there was widespread interest in the concept (Spreitzer, 1995) and since then, evidence has continued to accumulate relating empowerment to work-related outcomes (Seibert, Silver, & Randolph, 2004). It is important to understand that empowerment is a process of changing the internal beliefs of people, rather than being simply a set of external actions (Conger, 1989).

Paired with the hope of empowerment is the ongoing need of volunteers in society. This calls for continued research and understanding of how volunteers are motivated. Yeung (2004) explains motivation as the “essential feature” and the “cornerstone” of volunteerism. The author goes on to give two reasons to study volunteer motivation, describing it as the “core of actualization and continuity of voluntary work” (pg 21) and an “excellent area of research for reflection on, and exploration of, the sociological conception of late-modern commitment and participation” (pg 22). Since empowerment is defined as a type of intrinsic task motivation (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990), empowerment is equally as important to research as motivation.

Many questions exist regarding volunteerism and empowerment. While empowerment has been studied in many different ways in the work environment, including through leader behaviors, work teams, empowerment climate, and psychological empowerment, little is known about empowerment in volunteer settings. Since the research on volunteerism and empowerment is still in the early stages, this study selected a qualitative approach exploring the phenomenon of empowerment to expand the literature, providing an open-ended approach seeking to uncover factors of empowerment unique to volunteerism.

Sample

Four church leaders from four different churches were contacted and asked to participate through identifying volunteers, and three churches/church leaders agreed to participate in the study. As such, all participants came from one of three churches, three participants from each of two churches, and two participants from one church. There were a total of eight participants in this study. All three churches were from the same medium-sized Midwestern city. Churches varied in size from average attendance of one church less than 500, one church 500 to 2,000, and one with greater than 2,000. Each church was part of a different denomination or sector of Christianity, but all shared in Christianity as their religion.

Participants ranged in age from the mid-thirties to mid-seventies. There were three male and five female participants. Weekly volunteer hours ranged from three hours to nearly 20 hours per week. All participants were married and had children, though the children varied in age from toddlers and younger to grown children living away from their parents' home on their own. Volunteer roles varied greatly, as did responsibilities

and expectations of each role. Involvement in community activities beyond church varied, and the amount of involvement within the church varied, though all were relatively involved. Interviews took between thirty-one and seventy-five minutes, and the average length was fifty minutes.

Research Design

This study consists of eight exploratory interviews with volunteers of three different churches. These volunteers were identified by a church leader with whom they worked. Leaders identified empowered volunteers through identification of displayed empowerment behaviors. The qualifications given to the leaders were as follows:

A volunteer is someone who...

- Recognizes a need
- Chooses to respond to need in ways beyond basic social obligations
- Is motivated by personal responsibility rather than monetary or other personal profit

The following are volunteer behaviors that exemplify empowered volunteers:

Volunteers who...

- Find meaning in their volunteer responsibilities
- Believe in their abilities to conduct volunteer tasks
- Make decisions on task methods, pace, and effort
- Shape strategic and administrative outcomes in the organization

In order to further the purposefulness of the sample, further restrictions were placed upon the selection of participants. In order to participate, volunteers must:

- Occupy a defined leadership role within the church, having written and agreed upon responsibilities
- Have held a volunteer role that meets the above criteria for a period of at least one year

Summary of Themes

From the interviews with these eight participants, several themes emerged. These themes were arranged by their prominence: primary and secondary. Four primary themes were evident, themes labeled *make a difference*, *lifestyle of service*, *rewarding*, and *passion*. Three secondary themes were also found: *awareness*, *ability*, and *autonomy*. Secondary themes were themes that were found to be important, but that were more of a backdrop of the position than a strong, emergent aspect of their volunteerism.

Primary Theme One: Make a Difference

The theme with the most codes in this study was participants' desire to *make a difference* in the world. This theme was communicated in a multitude of ways, as some communicated volunteering as providing purpose in their lives, others focused on life not being all about me, while some focused on the importance of the impact on others, and still yet some participants talked about helping others through either an experience similar to theirs or helping to enjoy something they loved. Every participant interviewed talked about making a difference in the world and with those around them in one way or another. This came through as a deep purpose to do what was right, to help others as one would want to be helped, and to see that more existed in this world than just themselves.

Primary Theme Two: Rewarding

One of the most surprising themes was the notion of the incredible amount of *reward* the participants felt from volunteering. Nearly synonymous with the word rewarding was the notion of a deep satisfaction the participants felt in serving. Every participant in the study talked about the rewards of volunteering in some way. This theme or feeling was so strong to the participants that many described themselves as fortunate to volunteer, thankful to give their time to someone or something else! The impression that volunteering gives back far more than what one gives was commonly heard from participants. Also, the relationships built in volunteering were another source of deep reward or satisfaction. Further, a couple participants connected this rewarding nature of volunteering to their self-worth.

Primary Theme Three: Lifestyle of Service

Seven of eight participants also shared a third theme – a *lifestyle of service*. This theme represents the idea that being a volunteer and serving others has become an integral part of who they are. Serving and volunteering is just a part of their lives that bleeds out into other aspects of their lives. Some participants described their volunteer experiences and responsibilities as a calling. The notion of calling is similar in some ways to the theme *make a difference*, where participants talked about having a purpose for what they do. Yet, the *lifestyle of service* theme is distinct from *make a difference* in that the lifestyle theme presents a theme of service in other aspects of life as well as in their volunteer role.

Primary Theme Four: Passion

Passion, love, desire, enjoyment, and belief are all aspects of the theme *passion*. Seven of the eight participants spoke of thoroughly enjoying, being passionate about, and

loving their volunteering. Similarly, with this deep zeal for their volunteering, many also had a sincere belief in what they were doing.

Secondary Theme One: Autonomy

The freedom to be a volunteer and be independent was another common theme of these participants, labeled *autonomy*. Seven of the eight volunteers mentioned either lack of guilt, independence, or freedom to operate within general guidelines. This theme came through as not only independence on when and how much to work, but also came through as a freedom of how to do the job. While most of the participants mentioned this theme, it seemed to be a primary factor for only a few. Others mentioned it as part of the aspects of their job, but it was more of a backdrop of the position than a strong, emergent aspect of their volunteerism.

Secondary Theme Two: Awareness

One of the most intriguing findings was the secondary theme of *awareness*. Five of the eight participants talked about actively seeing needs around them. This is the essence of the *awareness* theme. Participants were aware of their surroundings and the needs right around them. It is as if it is a precursor to action, whether initial action and involvement or becoming involved in a larger capacity. Even the three participants that did not explicitly state that they “saw a need” or something similar as an action step, these three still described instances where they saw something and took action to complete it.

Secondary Theme Three: Ability

Six of eight participants talked about having an *ability* to do what they were doing. Overall, similar to the *awareness* theme, participants talked about it to a lesser

extent than the primary themes so it was classified as secondary. The *ability* theme entails the mentality or feeling that the participants were capable of doing the tasks.

Summary of Research Findings

Participants had a strong desire to have a purpose in their lives through *making a difference* in, and having an impact on, other people's lives. An especially interesting aspect of this concept was their desire to help others either through something they had been through or help others enjoy something they enjoyed. The participants also found their volunteerism deeply satisfying and *rewarding*. In fact, they enjoyed it so much so that they felt they were the primary benefactors of their volunteerism, not those they were serving. Understanding these critical pieces of the participants' volunteer experience, it is not surprising that these volunteers had developed a *lifestyle of service* and volunteering. Most participants could not imagine life without volunteering, even if they had not volunteered for all of their lives. It is difficult to describe the amount of *passion* the participants felt for the work they did. This came through as either a deep love or a want from within that gave participants a heart to do the work. It was so strong it even drowned out most, if any, negatives or drawbacks to the volunteer role.

To a lesser extent than those mentioned above, the participants also described a few other aspects of their volunteerism. These empowered participants experienced freedom in their volunteer roles. This *autonomy* was expressed through a freedom of when and how much to work as well as how to go about their job. Intriguingly, participants also developed an *awareness* of the needs around them and were able to see things that they desired to make a difference in. Finally, in some way, shape, or form, they felt able to do their job. This *ability* may have come through work experience,

encouragement, or equipping, but ultimately volunteers felt competent in doing the tasks of their volunteer position.

Discussion

Empowered volunteers from this study have a desire to *make a difference*. This sense of purpose and desire to help others is congruent with Mowen and Sujan's (2005) volunteer behavior study that found that a motive to help others was positively related to volunteering. Further, this theme is similar to Garland, Myers, and Wolfer's (2009) theme of *Response to Human Need*. This concept is similar to the *Values* function of the Volunteer Functions Inventory of Clary et al. (1998). Those with the *Values* function express values of altruistic and humanitarian concern for others (Clary et al., 1998). This is an important function of volunteers, as Fletcher and Major (2004) found *Values* to be the highest function among a sample of medical student volunteers. Finkelstein (2008) found that volunteers gave more time the more their Values motives were fulfilled. The sample of participants from this present study possessed a high *Values* function and affirm the notion that volunteers with altruistic and humanitarian concern are likely to be more involved and dedicated to their organization. The Values function and the notion of *making a difference* bear similarity to the psychological empowerment cognition of *Meaning* as defined by Spreitzer (1995), and the researcher asserts that if volunteers have the opportunity to make a difference, they are more likely to be empowered volunteers.

On the other hand, when comparing the findings of this study to literature, a lack of desire to *make a difference* may not lead to less involvement or dedication. Hartenian and Lilly (2009) argued that egoism, the opposite of altruism, may be associated with attitudes that lead to longer-term relationships with an agency. Clary et al.'s (1998)

Volunteer Functions Inventory has no function related to altruism but does include the *Enhancement* function. Those with this function volunteer to grow personally, or obtain satisfaction related to self-esteem (Clary et al., 1998). Haski-Leventhal (2009) discussed literature that argues that pure altruism does not exist, but that instead altruistic acts are basically egotistic in that helping others is merely a means to increase one's own satisfaction (Smith, 2000, as cited in Haski-Leventhal, 2009). However, Haski-Leventhal (2009), in her review of altruism and volunteerism, went on to challenge, "It is time to more broadly acknowledge the possibility of a moral and alter-centered humanity, and to see that not all altruism demonstratively serves the helper" (p. 293). Yet another factor that could play into altruism and volunteerism is identity. Volunteerism has also been connected to altruism through cultural identity, as Wilson and Musick (1998) identified cultural capital predicted volunteering along with human and social capital. An identity through a strong sense of community may also play a role, as it did with Haski-Leventhal, Ben-Arieh, and Melton's (2008) study of rural American volunteers (as cited in Haski-Leventhal, 2009). Participants in the present study showed both a strong desire to *make a difference* and a strong *rewarding* feeling, or feeling of satisfaction. While it appeared that participants were volunteering for purely altruistic reasons, results of this study are inconclusive whether these participants volunteer because of a self-fulfilling desire to give themselves satisfaction, because of a strong sense of community, or based on altruism alone.

Indeed, whether or not the motivations of volunteers are self-seeking, the concept of satisfaction derived from volunteering is apparent in this study, and is congruent with current literature. Deep satisfaction, meaning, and rewards were results of Gooch's

(2005) study of environmental volunteers, Warburton and McLaughlin's (2006) study of aging women, and Yanay and Yanay's (2008) study on volunteer dropouts. In fact, Yanay and Yanay found that volunteers were dropping out to preserve positive self-feeling. In other words, if volunteers were "feeling bad" about their volunteer experience they would leave rather than continue to feel negatively. It is therefore reasonable to assert that committed, long-term volunteers, as those interviewed in this study, are still volunteering because their positive self-feelings have been preserved, and that positive self-feeling, or rewards, is a factor to longer-term commitment. Further, the results of this study match Kulik's (2007) study of volunteers, finding that participants with high levels of empowerment expressed high levels of satisfaction and that those with high levels of self-esteem also expressed high levels of satisfaction. Millette and Gagne (2008) conducted a volunteer study and found a relationship between job satisfaction and job characteristics. While this may be the case for some volunteers, and was the case for some of the volunteers in this study, it appears that satisfaction is gleaned from more than just job characteristics. Finally, satisfaction of the volunteers in this study also aligns with studies of empowerment in the business sector, as Seibert, Silver, and Randolph (2004) found that psychological empowerment was positively related to job satisfaction.

Based on the results of this study, the researcher asserts that with empowered volunteers in a Christian church setting, the volunteers have been impacted by their service and have changed themselves to be able to incorporate service into their lives in a larger capacity. Similarly, after conducting a study on volunteers in parks and recreation, Barnes and Sharpe (2009) made the recommendation that opportunities to volunteer be developed around lifestyles. The authors state that developing experiences that are

integrated and compatible with people's lifestyle is a "key strategy for recruitment and retention" (p. 183). Yet, the present study results align with results from the Garland, Myers, and Wolfer (2008) study that indicated changes in faith, attitudes, values, and behaviors as a result of volunteering. Participants in this study talked about the growing role volunteerism had in their lives. Indeed, the concept of aligning volunteers and lifestyles is noticeable. But, which comes first – do volunteers begin volunteering and change themselves and incorporate service into their lives, or do volunteers have lives that they only fit into volunteering? The participants from this study integrated service into a regular part of life.

The empowered volunteers in this study described *autonomy* to be an important aspect of their volunteerism. Participants talked about the freedom they felt to do what they thought necessary within the boundaries of the organization's policies and vision. Literature supports these findings. Boezeman and Ellemers (2009) found that autonomy needs are positively related to the intent to remain a volunteer. Schroer and Hertel (2009) discovered that Wikipedia volunteers' perceived autonomy enhanced their engagement and satisfaction. Gagne (2003) found that autonomy orientation, or how much one's own behavior is self-directed, was strongly related to prosocial behavior, which was measured by volunteer hours. In the aforementioned Millette and Gagne (2008) study, autonomous motivation mediated the relationship between job characteristics and satisfaction. From Nichols and Ojala's (2009) study of sports volunteers, one important expectation of volunteers was their flexibility of engagement, hence greater autonomy. One of the four cognitions of psychological empowerment is *Self-determination* (Spreitzer, 1995), which bears great similarity in definition to autonomy, described as "an individual's sense of

having a choice in initiating and regulating actions” (pg. 1443) and can be traced to Deci, Connell, and Ryan’s (1989) and Deci and Ryan’s (1987) work on autonomy and self-determination, as well as Thomas and Velthouse’s (1990) construct. However, on the other hand, this does not mean to give volunteers no direction. Participants from this study appreciated the vision and guidelines they received from their organization. Yanay and Yanay (2008) discovered that an organizational policy of nonintervention was frustrating to volunteers. It may be that the volunteers are looking for flexible work arrangements, but still need appropriate direction and guidance as necessary. Hence, the researcher asserts that autonomy in balance with proper guidance leads to greater empowerment and satisfaction.

Participants in this study described an *ability* to do to do their volunteer role through skills or through being equipped. These volunteers had self-confidence. Interestingly, Ferrari, Luhrs, and Lyman (2007) found that stress was predicted by low self-esteem among volunteer caregivers to the elderly. Similar to the psychological empowerment construct that participants were identified by, the cognition of *Competence* is one’s belief in his or her own skill (Spreitzer, 1995). The results of the present study support evidence that confidence in one’s abilities leads to psychological empowerment.

Interestingly, the participants in this study did not fully or completely reflect the psychological empowerment definition on which Spreitzer (1995) based her workplace scale. The two primary themes of *make a difference* and *rewarding* most resemble the *Meaning* cognition of value of one’s work. The secondary theme of *ability* found in this study largely reflects the *Competence* cognition of self-efficacy. The secondary theme of *autonomy* closely resembles Spreitzer’s *Self-determination* cognition which involves an

individual's sense of choice for one's actions. Little mention was given, and no themes or relevant findings reflect the *Impact* cognition which involves influencing organizational outcomes. Therefore, of the four cognitions, *Meaning*, *Competence*, *Self-determination*, and *Impact*, *Meaning* was largely overemphasized with two primary themes, *Competence* and *Self-determination* were moderately recognized with a secondary theme per cognition, and *Impact* was underemphasized. While multiple factors could be in play with the absence of the *Impact* cognition, the strong emphasis of *Meaning* is the most impactful finding in this research.

Assimilation of Volunteer Empowerment

With the findings of this study, supported by literature, a visual diagram display is proposed. Participants from this study, however they started volunteering, had an energy or momentum generated from their volunteer experience and empowerment. Some participants' wheel started from life-changing incidents, while others were put in motion by parents or by their faith. This momentum can be described as a rotating wheel. While the wheel may have started very small from a volunteer experience or by becoming aware of volunteer opportunities and needs, something started the wheel spinning. Once spinning, different drivers, or themes, come into play to make the wheel spin faster. Whether it was *rewarding* experiences or greater *awareness*, participants became more involved. Further, the more drivers that are in place, the faster the wheel goes. Similar to a variable-speed pulley, as the wheel spins faster it gets larger and shows greater empowerment. Several participants described the process of starting in a small role, and then getting more and more involved. For some participants, it may be that some drivers are more prominent than others, and some drivers may be non-existent. Nonetheless, as

the individual continues volunteering, the wheel, with the drivers in place, continues to spin faster, grow, and have a greater impact. The following illustration (Figure 1) shows this visually.

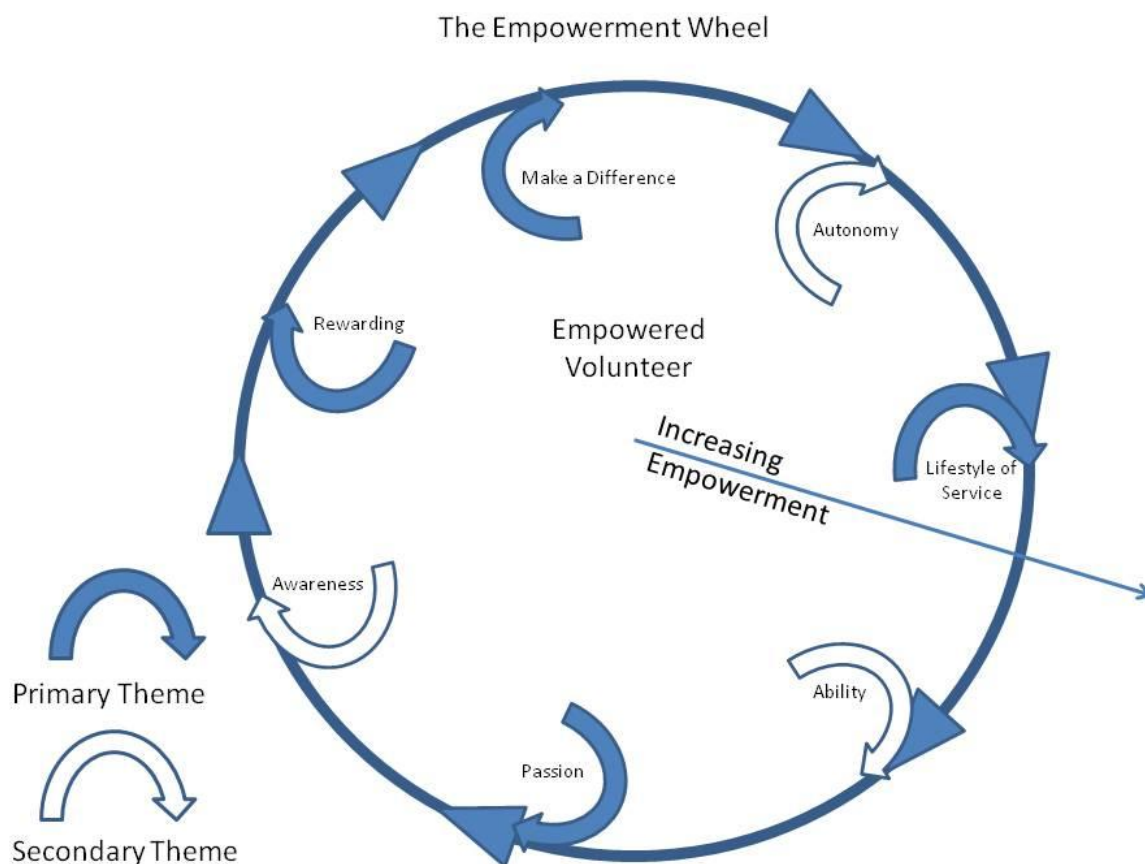


Figure 1. The Empowerment Wheel.

Implications for Research

This research study provides several implications for current academic literature. First, the findings provide a compass for direction on bridging the empowerment and volunteerism literature in that these findings provide clues of how empowerment in volunteers is different than empowerment in the workplace context. Further, a psychological empowerment scale for volunteers could be well-guided by utilizing the

findings of this study in consideration of a concept map. After all, from the definition used in this study, volunteers are motivated by personal responsibility and not personal profit, and are responding to needs beyond basic social obligation (Garland, Myers, & Wolfer, 2009). The findings give insight to how empowerment may be uniquely different in volunteers than in the workplace and this is critical in the development of a scale. Specifically, results of this study showed that volunteers gave a greater focus on the *Meaning* cognition of Spreitzer (1995) and scale and less focus on *Impact*. The results resembling *Meaning* were strongly emphasized and may be critical in understanding volunteer empowerment.

Further, it may provide further clues into an already researched workplace psychological empowerment literature. If these findings demonstrate how people feel empowered when they have no obligation to a paycheck or to the organization, then it could possibly guide, in turn, how they would ideally be empowered in a workplace context. Research could work backwards, so to speak, to see if indeed putting aspects that led to volunteer empowerment into the workplace resulted in greater empowerment achieved.

Implications for Practitioners

The implications of the findings of this study for those working with, managing, directing, or leading volunteers revolve around the Empowerment Wheel. As can be seen from the Empowerment Wheel, it may be helpful for a volunteer coordinator to put effort into providing the drivers necessary to make volunteers feel empowered. For example, it may be helpful for a volunteer coordinator to help volunteers find their passion. Helping volunteers see the value, and in turn feel satisfied, may also have large return. Providing

volunteers the opportunity to be autonomous in their work role should help them feel a freedom from guilt and therefore remove a potential obstacle from the volunteer.

This study indicated that participants have an *awareness* of the needs around them. While little literature could be found connecting volunteers and awareness, an article by Bono, Shen, and Snyder (2010) suggested both knowledge and awareness of the community, as well as actual community engagement, could be increased through community leadership programs. It is the author's belief that, similar to communities, organizations or agencies could increase awareness within their organizations through leadership programs or through a focus of development of the members or volunteers.

Future Research

The significance volunteers placed upon the satisfaction they receive draws out the first recommendation for future research. Looking at literature that discusses the notion that all volunteerism is a type of egoism in that good deeds are merely means to greater personal satisfaction (Smith, 2000, as cited in Haski-Leventhal, 2009), juxtaposed with Haski-Leventhal's (2009) argument of the possibility of true altruism, warrants further research on understanding this balance.

While this study provided clues to how volunteers become empowered, further qualitative research should be conducted to confirm and expand on this research. A complete study could be focused on how volunteers transition from little volunteering to becoming those who are wholeheartedly behind their volunteer work. It is also recommended, for greater accuracy, to utilize a mixed-methods approach by utilizing an empowerment scale, such as Spreitzer's (1995), to identify appropriate participants. While it may not be perfectly accurate to volunteers, it would be more accurate at

identifying psychological empowerment than an outside perspective (leader's) that this study utilized.

From the results of this study, it may appear that the concept map for psychological empowerment should be adjusted to match the greater influence of *meaning* and the lesser, if any, influence of *impact* of Spreitzer's (1995) psychological empowerment research in the workplace context. With this adjustment in the concept map should come adjustments of an empowerment scale to accurately reflect the updated concept map for volunteer empowerment. Further, an empowerment scale utilizing volunteer-specific language would be less confusing and more accurate for future research.

Interestingly, many of the participants had been volunteering for a long period of time, most ten or more years, and often starting as soon as or shortly after joining the church. However, especially those in a leadership capacity had only been in the role for a few years. Hustinx and Handy (2009) recommended that organizations recruit volunteers in the short-run through specific programs and activities using volunteers, but that longer-term volunteers have a greater appreciation for organizational mission and principles. In general, results of the present study support these findings. Further, Harrison (1995) conducted a study on intention to volunteer and found that episodic volunteer work can be traced to the relative strength of intentions. While it could be that long-term volunteers were easily chosen and well-known by leaders, further research should be conducted to understand if empowerment strengthens over time spent at an organization.

One of the limitations to the design of this study was that participants were selected by a church leader. One of the primary premises of the psychological

empowerment construct entails that a person is only empowered if he or she psychologically experiences empowerment, not just if someone else thinks so, or does something that might make someone feel empowered. Hence, we asked the leaders to identify volunteers that exhibited specific behaviors, which were behaviors based from Spreitzer's (1995) psychological empowerment scale definition. While the purpose of this study was not to prove that a leader could accurately identify empowered volunteers, it is worth noting that facets of the empowerment construct indeed surfaced from the participants' experiences. In fact, the results of this study are quite relevant in guiding future research on the psychological empowerment of volunteers. Spreitzer defined empowerment as intrinsic task motivation manifested in four cognitions: *Meaning*, *Competence*, *Self-determination*, and *Impact*. Interestingly, the participants in this study gave *Meaning* the greatest mention, as two of the primary themes of *make a difference* and *rewarding* both contain elements of *Meaning* in them. Next were *Self-determination* and *Competence*, as the secondary themes of *autonomy* and *ability* reflected these cognitions, respectively. However, *Impact*, as is defined in psychological empowerment as having a voice in the organization's strategic, administrative, and operating outcomes (Spreitzer, 1995), was not something heard from many participants. Participants did feel they had a say in how they went about their work, but that, by definition, is *Self-determination*. Further research should be conducted to see if the empowerment construct is balanced for volunteerism as it is in the workplace context, and then following, if a scale to measure the construct would also be equally balanced.

Further, this group of empowered volunteers were *passionate* about their volunteerism. Interestingly, little research could be found regarding volunteers and

passion. Is passion another facet of empowerment? Or is it a mediator? Or is it also a part of the *Meaning* cognition of Spreitzer's (1995) empowerment definition? Further research should be conducted to understand the role of passion in volunteer empowerment.

Finally, volunteers give of their time and efforts to many different organizations for many different reasons. This particular study interviewed faith-based volunteers. A connection to God, a higher calling, and other faith-related aspects could make the results of this study uniquely different from volunteers not associated with faith-based organizations. Therefore, further research is recommended with volunteers in different contexts to fully understand empowerment in volunteers of all contexts.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to understand the experience of empowerment among volunteers. Volunteer empowerment was discovered through four primary themes, *make a difference*, *rewarding*, *lifestyle of service*, and *passion*, and three secondary themes, *autonomy*, *awareness*, and *ability*. Other relevant findings included and revolved around volunteer time and balance, challenges, propelling forces, and getting started. Current literature was reviewed and incorporated into the findings of this study. Themes were integrated into a visual display – the empowerment wheel – which shows the experience and scope of volunteer empowerment found in this study. Implications for literature and practitioners were discussed. Future research directions from this study are vast and were included as part of this study.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Phone Script and Email to Church Leader.

Phone script to church leader:

Hello _____!

My name is Adam Peters and I am a graduate student at the University of Nebraska. I am conducting interviews with church volunteers. The purpose of this study is to understand the lived experience of volunteers. We would like to interview up to three or four of your volunteers that you identify under our definition of volunteers. Would you be willing to participate in the study?

Email to church leaders asking to identify volunteers:

Hello _____!

Thank you again for your willingness to be involved with this study. Please identify any volunteers who fit the following description:

A volunteer is someone who...

- Recognizes a need
- Chooses to respond to need in ways beyond basic social obligations
- Is motivated by personal responsibility rather than monetary or other personal profit

Specifically, we are looking for volunteers who display these behaviors:

Volunteers who...

- Find meaning in their volunteer responsibilities
- Believe in their abilities to conduct volunteer tasks
- Make decisions on task methods, pace, and effort
- Shape strategic and administrative outcomes in the organization

Finally, to make this a quality study, a couple more parameters were developed:

In order to participate, volunteers must...

- Occupy a defined leadership role within the church
- Have held a volunteer role that meets the above criteria for a period of at least one year

Please reply with names of participants that fit this description and phone numbers where these volunteers can be reached. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask.
Thank you again for your time!

Sincerely,

Adam K Peters
Graduate Student
Ag Leadership, Education, and Communication
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
adam@huskers.unl.edu
M: 402.314.4136

Appendix B. Phone Script and Email to Participants.

Phone Script for Participant:

Hello _____!

My name is Adam Peters and I am a graduate student at the University of Nebraska. I am conducting interviews with church volunteers. The purpose of this study is to understand the lived experience of volunteers. Your pastor, _____, identified you as someone who meets our criteria for being a participant in our study. Interviews will take approximately 90 minutes. I would like to interview you sometime in the next two weeks. Would you be willing to participate in this study?

Email reminder with questions:

Hello _____!

I am looking forward to meeting you on _____ at __:__ A/P.M. at _____. This email serves as a reminder for this appointment and to give you a copy of the interview questions that you will be asked. Below is the list of questions.

1. Please tell me as much as you can about how you came to your current volunteer role.
2. Please describe, in as much detail as you would like, your volunteer experience.
3. Please describe how your volunteer experience affects other aspects of your life.
4. Do you think of yourself as empowered? What does that term mean to you?
5. Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience of being a volunteer?

Thank you again for your willingness to participate! I look forward to meeting you soon.

Sincerely,

Adam K Peters
 Graduate Student
 Ag Leadership, Education, and Communication
 University of Nebraska-Lincoln
 adam@huskers.unl.edu
 M: 402.314.4136

Appendix C. Consent Form (found on the following two pages).

Title of the Study: The Lived Experience of Empowered Volunteers: A Study of Christian Church Volunteers

We invite you to take part in a research study being conducted at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. You are being invited to take part in a research study because you were identified by a pastor at your church as a volunteer that displays empowered behaviors. If you are under 19 you are not eligible for this study. If you do not occupy and have not held for a period of at least one year a defined leadership role in your church, are not eligible for this study.

The research will be conducted at the place of your choosing. Locations should be somewhere you are comfortable and where you are not concerned with others overhearing your statements. A conference room of a coffee shop or restaurant are good examples. Meeting at the church where you volunteer is not recommended. You will need to meet only one time for the study. This visit will take approximately 90 minutes. The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for this study is 90 minutes over the next 30 days.

The research will consist of an interview. The researcher will ask you to fill out a demographic sheet, then the interview will begin. The researcher will ask you a series of questions. You will have the opportunity to see these questions at least 48 hours before the interview. However, further probing questions may be asked for clarification or for further information. Interviews will be audio-recorded.

_____ Initial if you agree to be audio recorded during the interview.

Before you volunteer to take part in this research, the study must be explained to you and you must be given a chance to ask questions. You should discuss anything that you do not understand with the person who is explaining it to you before you agree to volunteer. Once all of your questions have been answered, you must sign this consent form, which gives us permission for you to participate. You will be given a copy of the signed consent form to take home with you. The nature of the study, the risks, inconveniences, discomforts, and other important information about the study are discussed below.

By participating in this study, we hope to learn more about the lived experience of empowerment of volunteers in a Christian church. You will not receive any known personal benefit from taking part in this study. Your willingness to take part, however, may, in the future, help society as a whole better understand this research topic. To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researchers or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, or in any other way receive a penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in this study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we



have gathered. You will not be personally identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of the study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private. We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. You will be assigned a pseudonym. Reference to any other information you provide us, such as others' information, pastor name, etc, as well as the church information, will be used only as necessary, and if so, pseudonyms will be used. Audio files will be removed from computers and from any portable storage devices, including audio recorder. Audio files and interview transcripts will be locked in a closet so that they cannot be accessed.

We will follow-up with you and provide to you a draft of the final report. At this time, we will ask for your feedback and provide the opportunity for you to provide any alternative language that may describe your experience more accurately.

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. You may call the investigator at any time, Adam Peters at (402) 314-4136, or the supervisory investigator, Dr. Mark Balschweid at (402) 472-8738.

If you have any questions that have not been answered by the investigator or to report any concerns about the research, please contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board at (402) 472-6965.

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study

Date

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

Signature of person obtaining consent

Appendix D. Interview Protocol.

Interview Protocol

Name _____

Date _____

Church _____

Location _____

Volunteer Role _____

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. I will be recording and transcribing our conversation verbatim. I will also take notes during our conversation and summarize them to you, giving you an opportunity to provide feedback on the conversation. It is important that we reflect what you say and mean. A verbatim transcription includes the “uhs” and “ahs” in order to get exactly what was said onto paper. Though I may quote you when writing the results of the study, your anonymity is assured and I will make every effort to disguise your church affiliation and identity while maintaining your views and opinions.

In this study, I am interested in learning about your lived experience as a volunteer at your church. You have had a chance to review these questions and give some thought to the responses. This is a semi-structured interview, so the dialogue may trigger additional questions which were not listed. Additional questions often help identify exactly what you mean.

Are you ready to begin?

<p>1)Please tell me as much as you are willing about how you came to your current volunteer role.</p>	<p>Observer Comments:</p>
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<p>2)Please describe, in as much detail as you would like, your volunteer experience.</p>	<p>Observer Comments:</p>
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<p>3)Please describe how your volunteer experience affects other aspects of your life.</p>	<p>Observer Comments:</p>
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<p>4)Do you think of yourself as empowered? What does that term mean to you?</p>	<p>Observer Comments:</p>
--	---------------------------

<p>5)Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience of being an volunteer?</p>	<p>Observer Comments:</p>
--	---------------------------

<p>Comments from summary of interview:</p>	<p>Observer Comments:</p>
--	---------------------------

Thank you for your time!

Appendix E. Demographics Sheet.

Demographic Information

Participant name: _____ Date: _____

Pseudonym: _____ Time: _____

Interviewed by: _____ Location: _____

Year born: _____ Ethnicity: _____

Church: _____

Volunteer role: _____

Years member of this church: _____ Years volunteering at this church: _____

Years in listed volunteer role: _____ Average # hours/week in volunteer role: _____

Budget responsible for: \$ _____ # other volunteers leading: _____

Other volunteer roles currently held (in/outside of church): _____

Hours/week volunteering in other roles: _____ Years volunteering in any capacity: _____

Previous volunteer roles held (in/outside of church): _____

Community organizations: _____

Occupation: _____

Marital status: _____ # of children: _____

Hobbies/interests: _____

Self-description: _____

Appendix F. List of Meaning Units

Desire/passion

Frustration with others

Help others enjoy what they do

Guilt Free

Ability

Fun

Worship

Rewarding

Not about me

Independence

Impact People

Purpose

Flexibility

Time

Teamwork

Common bond in Christ

Pride

Self-worth

Calling

Fortunate to volunteer

Relationships

See needs/awareness

Life-changing incidents

Freedom within guidelines

Encouragement

Leadership influence

Part of who I am

Peace

Appendix G. Confidentiality Agreement (found on the following page).

As a data coder/analyzer for the Volunteer Empowerment study, I recognize my responsibility as an ethical researcher. I have been through CITI/IRB Training. I understand that all data is confidential. Therefore, I will not share this information, nor will I use it in any way for my own research or benefit.

Signature

Date